PYLON

By

William Faulkner

ADURAI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
4 SEP 1971
2

1955
CHATTO & WINDUS
LONDON

By the Same Author

★

Soldier's Pay
Sartoris
The Sound and The Fury
Mosquitoes
As I Lay Dying
Sanctuary
These Thirteen (Short Stories)
Light in August
A Green Bough (Poems)
Doctor Martino and Other Stories
Absalom, Absalom!
The Unvanquished
The Wild Palms
The Hamlet
Go Down, Moses
Intruder in the Dust
Knight's Gambit
Collected Stories
Requiem for a Nun

PUBLISHED BY
Chatto & Windus Ltd
40 WILLIAM IV STREET
LONDON, WC2

FIRST PUBLISHED 1935
FIRST PUBLISHED IN THIS EDITION 1955
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

MADURAI UNIVERSITY ★ MADURAI - 2

Dedication of an Airport

For a full minute Jiggs stood before the window in a light spatter of last night's confetti lying against the window-base like spent dirty foam, light-poised on the balls of his grease-stained tennis shoes, looking at the boots. Slant-shimmered by the intervening plate they sat upon their wooden pedestal in unblemished and inviolate implication of horse and spur, of the posed country-life photographs in the magazine advertisements, beside the easel-wise cardboard placard with which the town had bloomed overnight as it had with the purple-and-gold tissue bunting and the trodden confetti and broken serpentine . . . the same lettering, the same photographs of the trim vicious fragile aeroplanes and the pilots leaning upon them in gargantuan irrelation as if the aeroplanes were a species of esoteric and fatal animals not trained or tamed but just for the instant inert, above the neat brief legend of name and accomplishment or perhaps just hope.

He entered the store, his rubber soles falling in quick hissing thuds on pavement and iron sill and then upon the tile floor of that museum of glass cases lighted suave and sourceless by an unearthly day-coloured substance in which the hats and ties and shirts, the belt-buckles and cuff-links and handkerchiefs, the pipes shaped like golf-clubs and the drinking-tools shaped like boots and barnyard fowls and the minute impedimenta for wear on ties and vest-chains shaped like bits and spurs, resembled biologic specimens put into the inviolate preservative before they had ever been breathed into. "Boots?" the clerk said. "The pair in the window?"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "How much?" But the clerk did not even move. He leaned back on the counter, looking down at the hard tough short-chinned face, blue-shaven, with a long thread-like and recently stanched razor-cut on it and in which the hot brown

eyes seemed to snap and glare like a boy's approaching for the first time the aerial wheels and stars and serpents of a night-time carnival; at the filthy raked swaggering peaked cap, the short thick muscle-bound body like the photographs of the one who two years before was light-middleweight champion of the army or Marine Corps or navy; the cheap breeches overcut to begin with and now skin-tight as if both they and their wearer had been recently and hopelessly rained on and enclosing a pair of short stocky thick fast legs like a polo pony's, which descended into the tops of a pair of boots, footless now and secured by two riveted straps beneath the insteps of the tennis shoes.

"They are twenty-two and a half," the clerk said.

"All right. I'll take them. How late do you keep open at night?"

"Until six."

"Hell! I'll be out at the airport then. I won't get back to town until seven. How about getting them then?" Another clerk came up: the manager, the floor-walker.

"You mean you don't want them now?" the first said.

"No," Jiggs said. "How about getting them at seven?"

"What is it?" the second clerk said.

"Says he wants a pair of boots. Says he can't get back from the airport before seven o'clock."

The second looked at Jiggs. "You a flyer?"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Listen. Leave a guy here. I'll be back by seven. I'll need them to-night."

The second also looked down at Jiggs' feet. "Why not take them now?"

Jiggs didn't answer at all. He just said, "So I'll have to wait until to-morrow."

"Unless you can get back before six," the second said.

"O.K.," Jiggs said. "All right, mister. How much do you want down?" Now they both looked at him: at the face, the hot eyes: the entire appearance articulate and complete, badge regalia and passport, of an oblivious and incorrigible insolvency. "To keep them for me. That pair in the window."

The second looked at the first. "Do you know his size?"

"That's all right about that," Jiggs said. "How much?"

The second looked at Jiggs. "You pay ten dollars and we will hold them for you until to-morrow."

"Ten dollars? Jesus, mister. You mean ten per cent. I could pay ten per cent. down and buy an aeroplane."

"You want to pay ten per cent. down?"

"Yair. Ten per cent. Call for them this afternoon if I can get back from the airport in time."

"That will be two and a quarter," the second said. When Jiggs put his hand into his pocket they could follow it, fingernail and knuckle, the entire length of the pocket, like watching the ostrich in the movie cartoon swallow the alarm clock. It emerged a fist and opened upon a wadded dollar bill and coins of all sizes. He put the bill into the first clerk's hand and began to count the coins on to the bill.

"There's fifty," he said. "Seventy-five. And fifteen's ninety, and twenty-five is . . ." His voice stopped; he became motionless, with the twenty-five-cent piece in his left hand and a half-dollar and four nickels on his right palm. The clerks watched him put the quarter back into his right hand and take up the four nickels. "Let's see," he said. "We had ninety, and twenty will be . . ."

"Two dollars and ten cents," the second said. "Take back two nickels and give him the quarter."

"Two and a dime," Jiggs said. "How about taking that down?"

"You were the one who suggested ten per cent."

"I can't help that. How about two and a dime?"

"Take it," the second said. The first took the money and went away. Again the second watched Jiggs' hand move downward along his leg, and then he could even see the two coins at the end of the pocket, through the soiled cloth.

"Where do you get this bus to the airport?" Jiggs said. The other told him. Now the first returned, with the cryptic scribbled duplicate of the sale; and now they both looked into the hot interrogation of the eyes.

"They will be ready for you when you call," the second said.

"Yair; sure," Jiggs said. "But get them out of the window."

"You want to examine them?"

"No. I just want to see them come out of that window." So again outside the window, his rubber soles resting upon that light confetti spatter more forlorn than spattered paint since it had neither inherent weight nor cohesiveness to hold it anywhere, which even during the time that Jiggs was in the store had decreased, thinned, vanishing particle by particle into nothing like foam does, he stood until the hand came into the window and drew the boots out. Then he went on, walking fast with his short bouncing curiously stiff-kneed gait. When he turned into Grandlieu Street he could see a clock, though he was already hurrying or rather walking at his fast stiff hard gait like a mechanical toy that has but one speed, and though the clock's face was still in the shadow of the opposite street side and what sunlight there was was still high, diffused, suspended in soft refraction by the heavy damp bayou-and-swamp-suspired air. There was confetti here too, and broken serpentine, in neat narrow swept windrows against wall angles and lightly vulcanized along the gutter rims by the flushing fireplugs of the past dawn, while, upcaught and pinned by the cryptic significant shields to door-front and lamp-post, the purple-and-gold bunting looped unbroken as a trolley wire above his head as he walked, turning at last at right angles to cross the street itself and meet that one on the opposite side making its angle too, to join over the centre of the street as though to form an aerial and bottomless regal-coloured cattle chute suspended at first floor level above the earth, and suspending beneath itself in turn, the outward-facing cheese-cloth-lettered interdiction which Jiggs, passing, slowed looking back to read: *Grandlieu Street CLOSED To Traffic* 8.0 P.M.—*Midnight.*

Now he could see the bus at the kerb, where they had told him it would be, with its cloth banner fastened by the four corners across its broad stern to ripple and flap in motion, and the wooden sandwich board at the kerb too: *Bluehound to Feinman Airport* 75c. The driver stood beside the open door; he too watched Jiggs' knuckles travel the length of the pocket. "Airport?" Jiggs said.

"Yes," the driver said. "You got a ticket?"

"I got seventy-five cents. Won't that do?"

"A ticket into the airport. Or a workman's pass. The passenger buses don't begin to run until noon." Jiggs looked at the driver with that hot pleasant interrogation, holding his breeches by one hand while he drew the other out of the pocket. "Are you working out there?" the driver said.

"Oh," Jiggs said. "Sure. I'm Roger Shumann's mechanic. You want to see my licence?"

"That'll be all right," the driver said. "Get aboard." In the driver's seat there lay folded a paper: one of the coloured ones, the pink or the green editions of the diurnal dog-watches, with a thick heavy type-splattered front page filled with ejaculations and pictures. Jiggs paused, stooped, turning.

"Have a look at your paper, cap," he said. But the driver did not answer. Jiggs took up the paper and sat in the next seat and took from his shirt pocket a crumpled cigarette-pack, up-ended it and shook into his other palm two cigarette-stubs and put the longer one back into the crumpled paper and into his shirt again. He lit the shorter one, pursing it away from his face and slanting his head aside to keep the match flame from his nose. Three more men entered the bus, two of them in overalls and the third in a kind of porter's cap made of or covered by purple-and-gold cloth in alternate stripes, and then the driver came and sat sideways in his seat.

"You got a ship in the race to-day, have you?" he said.

"Yair," Jiggs said. "In the three-seventy-five cubic inch."

"How does it look to you? Do you think you will have a chance?"

"We might if they would let us fly it in the two hundred cubic inch," Jiggs said. He took three quick draws from the cigarette-stub like darting a stick at a snake and snapped it through the still-open door as though it were the snake, or maybe a spider, and opened the paper. "Ship's obsolete. It was fast two years ago, but that's two years ago. We'd be O.K. now if they had just quit building racers when they finished the one we got.

There ain't another pilot out there except Shumann that could have even qualified it."

"Shumann's good, is he?"

"They're all good," Jiggs said, looking at the paper. It spread its pale green surface: heavy, black-splotched, staccato: *Airport Dedication Special*; in the exact middle the photograph of a plump, bland, innocently sensual Levantine face beneath a raked fedora hat; the upper part of a thick body buttoned tight and soft into a peaked light-coloured double-breasted suit with a carnation in the lapel: the photograph inletted like a medallion into a drawing full of scrolled wings and propeller symbols which enclosed a shield-shaped pen-and-ink reproduction of something apparently cast in metal and obviously in existence somewhere and lettered in gothic relief:

FEINMAN AIRPORT

NEW VALOIS, FRANCIANA

Dedicated to

THE AVIATORS OF AMERICA

and

COLONEL H. I. FEINMAN,

Chairman Sewage Board

Through Whose Undeviating Vision and Unflagging Effort This Airport was Raised Up and Created out of the Waste Land at the Bottom of Lake Rambaud at a Cost of One Million Dollars

"This Feinman," Jiggs said. "He must be a big son of a bitch."

"He's a son of a bitch all right," the driver said. "I guess you'd call him big too."

"He gave you guys a nice airport, anyway," Jiggs said.

"Yair," the driver said. "Somebody did."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "It must have been him. I notice he's got his name on it here and there."

"Here and there; yair," the driver said. "In electric lights on both hangars and on the floor and the ceiling of the lobby and four times on each lamp-post and a guy told me the beacon spells it too but I don't know about that because I don't know the Morse code."

"For Christ's sake," Jiggs said. Now a fair crowd of men, in the overalls or the purple-and-gold caps, appeared suddenly and began to enter the bus, so that for the time the scene began to resemble that comic stage one where the entire army enters one taxi-cab and drives away. But there was room for all of them and then the door swung in and the bus moved away and Jiggs sat back, looking out. The bus swung immediately away from Grandlieu Street and Jiggs watched himself plunging between iron balconies, catching fleeting glimpses of dirty paved courts as the bus seemed to rush with tremendous clatter and speed through cobbled streets which did not look wide enough to admit it, between low brick walls which seemed to sweat a rich slow over-fecund smell of fish and coffee and sugar, and another odour profound faint and distinctive as a musty priest's robe: of some spartan effluvium of mediaeval convents.

Then the bus ran out of this and began to run, faster still, through a long avenue between palm-bordered bearded live oak groves and then suddenly Jiggs saw that the live oaks stood not in earth but in water so motionless and thick as to make no reflection, as if it had been poured about the trunks and allowed to set. The bus ran suddenly past a row of flimsy cabins whose fronts rested upon the shell foundation of the road itself and whose rears rested upon stilts to which row-boats were tied and between which nets hung drying, and he saw that the roofs were thatched with the smoke-coloured growth which hung from the trees, before they flicked away and the bus ran again over-arched by the oak boughs from which the moss hung straight and windless as the beards of old men sitting in the sun. "Jesus," Jiggs said. "If a man don't own a boat here he can't even go to the can, can he?"

"Your first visit down here?" the driver said. "Where you from?"

"Anywhere," Jiggs said. "The place I'm staying away from right now is Kansas."

"Family there, huh?"

"Yair. I got two kids there; I guess I still got the wife too."

"So you pulled out."

"Yair. Jesus, I couldn't even keep back enough to have my shoes half-soled. Every time I did a job her or the sheriff would catch the guy and get the money before I could tell him I was through; I would make a parachute jump and one of them would have the jack and be on the way back to town before I even pulled the rip-cord."

"For Christ's sake," the driver said.

"Yair," Jiggs said, looking out at the back-rushing trees. "This guy Feinman could spend some more of the money giving these trees a haircut, couldn't he?" Now the bus, the road, ran out of the swamp though without mounting, with no hill to elevate it; it ran now upon a flat plain of saw-grass and of cypress and oak stumps . . . a pocked desolation of some terrific and apparently purposeless reclamation across which the shell road ran ribbon-blanched towards something low and dead ahead of it—something low, unnatural: a chimera quality which for the moment prevented one from comprehending that it had been built by man and for a purpose. The thick heavy air was full now of a smell thicker, heavier, though there was yet no water in sight; there was only the soft pale sharp chimera-shape above which pennons floated against a further drowsy immensity which the mind knew must be water, apparently separated from the flat earth by a mirage line so that, taking shape now as a double-winged building, it seemed to float lightly like the apocryphal turreted and battlemented cities in the coloured Sunday sections, where beneath sill-less and floorless arches people with yellow and blue flesh pass and repass: myriad, purposeless, and free from gravity. Now the bus, swinging, presented in broadside the low broad main building with its two hangar wings, modernistic, crenellated, with its façade faintly Moorish or Californian beneath the gold-and-purple pennons whipping in

a breeze definitely from water and giving to it an air both aerial and aquatic like a mammoth terminal for some species of machine of a yet unvisioned to-morrow, to which air earth and water will be as one. And viewed from the bus across a plaza of beautiful and incredible grass labyrinthed by concrete driveways which Jiggs will not for two or three days yet recognize to be miniature replicas of the concrete runways on the field itself, a mathematic monogram of two capital F's laid by compass to all the winds. The bus ran into one of these, slowing between the bloodless grapes of lamp-globes on bronze poles; as Jiggs got out he stopped to look at the four F's cast into the quadrants of the base before going on.

He went around the main building and followed a narrow alley like a gutter, ending in a blank and knobless door; he put his hand too among the handprints in oil or grease on the door and pushed through it into a narrow alcove walled by neatly ranked and numbered tools from a faint and cavernous murmur. The alcove contained a lavatory, a row of hooks from which depended garments—civilian shirts and coats, one pair of trousers with dangling braces, the rest greasy dungarees, one of which Jiggs took down and stepped into and bounced lightly up and around his shoulders all in one motion, already moving towards a second door built mostly of chicken-wire and through which he could now see the hangar itself, the glass-and-steel cavern, the aeroplanes, the racers. Wasp-waisted, wasp-light, still, trim, vicious, small and immobile, they seemed to poise without weight, as though made of paper for the sole purpose of resting upon the shoulders of the dungaree-clad men about them. With their soft bright paint tempered somewhat by the steel-filtered light of the hangar they rested for the most part complete and intact, with whatever it was that the mechanics were doing to them of such a subtle and technical nature as to be invisible to the lay eye, save for one. Unbonneted, its spare entrails revealed as serrated top-and-bottom lines of delicate rocker arms and rods, inferential in their very myriad delicacy of a weightless and terrific speed any momentary faltering of which would be the irreparable difference between motion and mere matter, it

appeared more profoundly derelict than the half-eaten carcass of a deer come suddenly upon in a forest.

Jiggs paused, still fastening the coverall's throat, and looked across the hangar at the three people busy about it—two of a size and one taller, all in dungarees although one of the two shorter ones was topped by a blob of savage meal-coloured hair which even from here did not look like man's hair. He did not approach at once; still fastening the coverall he looked on and saw, in another clump of dungarees beside another aeroplane, a small tow-headed boy in khaki miniature of the men, even to the grease. "Jesus Christ," Jiggs thought. "He's done smeared oil on them already. Laverne will give him hell." He approached on his short bouncing legs; already he could hear the boy talking in the loud assured carrying voice of a spoiled middle-western child. He came up and put out his blunt hard grease-grained hand and scoured the boy's head.

"Look out," the boy said. Then he said, 'Where you been? Laverne and Roger——" Jiggs scoured the boy's head again and then crouched, his fists up, his head drawn down into his shoulders in burlesque pantomime. But the boy just looked at him. "Laverne and Roger——" he said again.

"Who's your old man to-day, kid?" Jiggs said. Now the boy moved. With absolutely no change of expression he lowered his head and rushed at Jiggs, his fists flailing at the man. Jiggs ducked, taking the blows while the boy hammered at him with puny and deadly purpose; now the other men had all turned to watch, with wrenches and tools and engine parts in their suspended hands. "Who's your old man, huh?" Jiggs said, holding the boy off and then lifting and holding him away while he still hammered at Jiggs' head with that grim and puny purpose. "All right!" Jiggs cried. He set the boy down and held him off, still ducking and dodging and now blind since the peaked cap was jammed over his face and the boy's hard light little fists hammering upon the cap. "Oke! Oke!" Jiggs cried. "I quit! I take it back!" He stood back and tugged the cap off his face and then he found why the boy had ceased: that he and the men too with their arrested tools and safety wire and engine parts were now looking

at something which had apparently crept from a doctor's cupboard and, in the snatched garments of an etherized patient in a charity ward, escaped into the living world. He saw a creature which, erect, would be better than six feet tall and which would weigh about ninety-five pounds, in a suit of no age or colour, as though made of air and doped like an aeroplane wing with the incrusted excretion of all articulate life's contact with the passing earth, which ballooned light and impedimentless about a skeleton frame as though suit and wearer both hung from a flapping clothes line; a creature with the leashed, eager loose-jointed air of a half-grown high-bred setter puppy, crouched facing the boy with its hands up too in more profound burlesque than Jiggs' because it was obviously not intended to be burlesque.

"Come on, Dempsey," the man said. "How about taking me on for an ice-cream cone? Hey?" The boy did not move. He was not more than six, yet he looked at the apparition before him with the amazed quiet immobility of the grown men. "How about it, huh?" the man said.

Still the boy did not move. "Ask him who's his old man," Jiggs said.

The man looked at Jiggs. "So's his old man?"

"No. Who's his old man."

Now it was the apparition who looked at Jiggs in a kind of shocked immobility. "Who's his old man?" he repeated. He was still looking at Jiggs when the boy rushed upon him with his fists flailing again and his small face grimly and soberly homicidal. The man was still stooping, looking at Jiggs; it seemed to Jiggs and the other men that the boy's fists made a light wooden-sounding tattoo as though the man's skin and the suit too hung on a chair while the man ducked and dodged, trying to guard his face while still glaring at Jiggs with that skull-like amazement, repeating, "Who's his old man? *Who's his old man?*"

When Jiggs at last reached the unbonneted aeroplane the two men had the super-charger already off and dismantled. "Been to your grandmother's funeral or something?" the taller one said.

"I been over there playing with Jack," Jiggs said. "You just

never saw me because there ain't any women around here to be looking at yet."

"Yair?" the other said.

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Where's that crescent wrench we bought in Kansas City?" The woman had it in her hand; she gave it to him and drew the back of her hand across her forehead, leaving a smudge of grease up and into the meal-coloured, the strong pallid Iowa-corn-coloured hair. So he was busy then, though he looked back once and saw the apparition with the boy now riding on his shoulder, leaning into the heads and greasy backs busy again about the other aeroplane, and when he and Shumann lifted the super-charger back on to the engine he looked again and saw them, the boy still riding on the man's shoulder, going out the hangar door and towards the apron. Then they put the cowling back on and Shumann set the propeller horizontal and Jiggs raised the aeroplane's tail, easily, already swinging it to pass through the door, the woman stepping back to let the wing pass her, looking back herself into the hangar now.

"Where did Jack go?" she said.

"Out towards the apron," Jiggs said. "With that guy."

"With what guy?"

"Tall guy. Says he is a reporter. That looks like they locked the graveyard up before he got in last night." The aeroplane passed her, swinging again into the thin sunshine, the tail high and apparently without weight on Jiggs' shoulder, his thick legs beneath it moving with tense stout piston-like thrusts, Shumann and the taller man pushing the wings.

"Wait a minute," the woman said. But they did not pause and she overtook and passed the moving tail group and reached down past the uptilted cockpit hatch and stepped clear, holding a bundle wrapped tightly in a dark sweater. The aeroplane went on; already the guards in the purple-and-gold porter caps were lowering the barrier cable on to the apron; and now the band had begun to play, heard twice: once the faint light almost airy thump-thump-thump from where the sun glinted on the actual horn mouths on the platform facing the reserved section of the

stands, and once where the disembodied noise blared brazen, metallic, and loud from the amplifier which faced the barrier. She turned and re-entered the hangar, stepping aside to let another aeroplane and its crew pass; she spoke to one of the men: "Who was that Jack went out with, Art?"

"The skeleton?" the man said. "They went to get an ice-cream cone. He says he is a reporter." She went on, across the hangar and through the chicken-wire door and into the tool room with its row of hooks from which depended the coats and shirts and now one stiff linen collar and tie such as might be seen on a barber-shop hook where a preacher was being shaved and which she recognized as belonging to the circuit-rider-looking man in steel spectacles who won the Graves Trophy race at Miami two months ago. There was neither lock nor hook on this door, and the other, the one through which Jiggs had entered, hung perfectly blank too save for the grease-prints of hands. For less than a second she stood perfectly still, looking at the second door while her hand made a single quick stroking movement about the door jamb where hook or lock would have been. It was less than a second, then she went on to the corner where the lavatory was—the grease-streaked bowl, the cake of what looked like lava, the metal case for paper towels—and laid the bundle carefully on the floor next the wall where the floor was cleanest, and rose and looked at the door again for a pause that was less than a second—a woman not tall and not thin, looking almost like a man in the greasy coverall, with the pale strong rough ragged hair actually darker where it was sunburned, a tanned heavy-jawed face in which the eyes looked like pieces of china. It was hardly a pause; she rolled her sleeves back, shaking the folds free and loose, and opened the coverall at the throat and freed it about her shoulders too like she had the sleeves, obviously and apparently arranging it so she would not need to touch the foul garment any more than necessary. Then she scrubbed face neck and forearms with the harsh soap and rinsed and dried herself and, stooping, keeping her arms well away from the coverall, she opened the rolled sweater on the floor. It contained a comb, a cheap metal vanity and a pair of stockings

rolled in turn into a man's clean white shirt and a worn wool skirt. She used the comb and the vanity's mirror, stopping to scrub again at the grease-smudge on her forehead. Then she unbuttoned the shirt and shook out the skirt and spread paper towels on the lavatory and laid the garments on them, openings upward and facing her and, holding the open edges of the coverall's front between two more paper towels, she paused and looked again at the door: a single still cold glance empty of either hesitation, concern, or regret while even here the faint beat of the band came in mute thuds and blares. Then she turned her back slightly towards the door and in the same motion with which she reached for the skirt she stepped out of the coverall in a pair of brown walking shoes, not new now and which had not cost very much when they had been, and a man's thin cotton undershorts and nothing else.

Now the first starting bomb went . . . a jarring thud followed by a vicious light repercussion as if the bomb had set off another smaller one in the now empty hangar and in the rotunda too. Within the domed steel vacuum the single report became myriad, high and everywhere about the concave ceiling like invisible unearthly winged creatures of that yet unvisioned tomorrow, mechanical instead of blood, bone and meat, speaking to one another in vicious high-pitched ejaculations as though concerting an attack on something below. There was an amplifier in the rotunda too and through it the sound of the aeroplanes turning the field pylon on each lap filled the rotunda and the restaurant where the woman and the reporter sat while the little boy finished the second dish of ice-cream. The amplifier filled rotunda and restaurant even above the sound of feet as the crowd moiled and milled and trickled through the gates on to the field, with the announcer's voice harsh masculine and disembodied. At the end of each lap would come the mounting and then fading snarl and snore of engines as the aeroplanes came up and zoomed and banked away, leaving once more the scuffle and murmur of feet on tile and the voice of the announcer reverberant and sonorous within the domed shell of glass and steel in a running commentary to which apparently none listened, as if

the voice were merely some unavoidable and inexplicable phenomenon of nature like the sound of wind or of erosion. Then the band would begin to play again, though faint and almost trivial behind and below the voice, as if the voice actually were that natural phenomenon against which all man-made sounds and noises blew and vanished like leaves. Then the bomb again, the faint fierce thwack-thwack-thwack, and the sound of engines again trivial and meaningless as the band, as though like the band mere insignificant properties which the voice used for emphasis as the magician uses his wand or handkerchief:

". . . ending the second event, the two hundred cubic inch class dash, the correct time of the winner of which will be given you as soon as the judges report. Meanwhile while we are waiting for it to come in I will run briefly over the afternoon's programme of events for the benefit of those who have come in late or have not purchased a programme which, by the way, may be purchased for twenty-five cents from any of the attendants in the purple-and-gold Mardi Gras caps. . . ."

"I got one here," the reporter said. He produced it, along with a mass of blank yellow copy and a folded newspaper of the morning, from the same pocket of his disreputable coat . . . a pamphlet already opened and creased back upon the faint mimeographed letters of the first page:

THURSDAY (DEDICATION DAY)

2.30 p.m.	Spot Parachute Jump. Purse $25.00.
3.00 p.m.	200 cu. in. Dash. Qualifying Speed 100 m.p.h. Purse $150.00 (1) 45%. (2) 30%. (3) 15%. (4) 10%.
3.30 p.m.	Aerial Acrobatics. Jules Despleins, France. Lieut. Frank Burnham, United States.
4.30 p.m.	Scull Dash. 375 cu. in. Qualifying Speed 160 m.p.h. (1, 2, 3, 4).
5.00 p.m.	Delayed Parachute Drop.

8.00 p.m.	Special Mardi Gras Evening Event. Rocket Plane. Lieut. Frank Burnham.

"Keep it," the reporter said. "I don't need it."

"Thanks," the woman said. "I know the setup." She looked at the boy. "Hurry and finish it," she said. "You have already eaten more than you can hold." The reporter looked at the boy too, with that expression leashed, eager, cadaverous; sitting forward on the flimsy chair in that attitude at once inert yet precarious and light-poised as though for violent and complete departure like a scarecrow in a winter field. "All I can do for him is buy him something to eat," he said. "To take him to see an air race would be like taking a colt out to Washington Park for the day. You are from Iowa and Shumann was born in Ohio and he was born in California and he has been across the United States four times, let alone Canada and Mexico. Jesus. He could take me and show me, couldn't he?" But the woman was looking at the boy; she did not seem to have heard at all.

"Go on," she said. "Finish it or leave it."

"And then we'll eat some candy," the reporter said. "Hey, Dempsey?"

"No," the woman said. "He's had enough."

"But maybe for later?" the reporter said. She looked at him now: the pale stare without curiosity, perfectly grave, perfectly blank, as he rose, moved, dry loose weightless and sudden and longer than a lath, the disreputable suit ballooning even in this windless conditioned air as he went towards the candy counter. Above the shuffle and murmur of feet in the lobby and above the clash and clatter of crockery in the restaurant the amplified voice still spoke, profound and effortless, as though it were the voice of the steel-and-chromium mausoleum itself, talking of creatures imbued with motion though not with life and incomprehensible to the puny crawling pain-webbed globe, incapable of suffering, wombed and born complete and instantaneous, cunning, intricate and deadly, from out some blind iron bat-cave of the earth's prime foundation:

". . . dedication meet, Feinman million-dollar airport, New Valois, Franciana, held under the official auspices of the American Aeronautical Association. And here is the official clocking of the winners of the two hundred cubic inch race which you just

witnessed. . . ." Now they had to breast the slow current; the gatemen (these wore tunics of purple-and-gold as well as caps) would not let them pass because the woman and the child had no tickets. So they had to go back and out and around through the hangar to reach the apron. And here the voice met them again . . . or rather it had never ceased; they had merely walked in it without hearing or feeling it like in the sunshine; the voice too almost as sourceless as light. Now, on the apron, the third bomb went off, and looking up the apron from where he stood among the other mechanics about the aeroplanes waiting for the next race, Jiggs saw the three of them . . . the woman in an attitude of inattentive hearing without listening, the scarecrow man who even from here Jiggs could discern to be talking steadily and even now and then gesticulating, the small khaki spot of the little boy's dungarees riding high on his shoulder and the small hand holding a scarce-tasted chocolate bar in a kind of static surfeit. They went on, though Jiggs saw them twice more, the second time the shadow of the man's and the little boy's heads falling for an incredible distance eastward along the apron. Then the taller man began to beckon him and already the five aeroplanes entered for the race were moving, the tails high on the shoulders of their crews, out towards the starting-line.

When he and the taller man returned to the apron the band was still playing. Faced by the bright stands with their whipping skyline of purple-and-gold pennons the amplifiers at regular intervals along the apron edge erupted snatched blares of ghostlike and ubiquitous sound which, as Jiggs and the other passed them, died each into the next without loss of beat or particular gain in sense or tune. Beyond the amplifiers and the apron lay the flat triangle of reclaimed and tortured earth dragged with slow mechanical violence into air and alternations of light—the ceaseless surface of the outraged lake notched by the oyster-and-shrimp-fossil bed, upon which the immaculate concrete runways lay in the attitude of two stiffly embracing capital F's, and on one of which the six aeroplanes rested like six motionless wasps, the slanting sun glinting on their soft bright paint and on the

faint propeller blurs. Now the band ceased; the bomb bloomed again on the pale sky and had already begun to fade even before the jarring thud, the thin vicious crack of reverberation; and now the voice again, amplified and ubiquitous, louder even than the spatter and snarl of the engines as the six aeroplanes rose raggedly and dissolved, converging, coveying, towards the scattering pylon out in the lake:

". . . fourth event, Scull Speed Dash, three hundred and seventy-five cubic inch, twenty-five miles, five times around, purse three hundred and twenty-five dollars. I'll give you the names of the contestants as the boys, the other pilots on the apron here, figure they will come in. First and second will be Al Myers and Bob Bullitt, in number thirty-two and number five. You can take your choice, your guess is as good as ours; they are both good pilots—Bullitt won the Graves Trophy against a hot field in Miami in December—and they are both flying Chance Specials. It will be the pilot, and I'm not going to make anybody mad by making a guess.—Vas you dere, Sharlie? I mean Mrs. Bullitt. The other boys are good too, but Myers and Bullitt have the ships. So I'll say third will be Jimmy Ott, and Roger Shumann and Joe Grant last, because as I said, the other boys have the ships.—There they are, coming in from the scattering pylon, and it's—— Yes, it's Myers or Bullitt out front and Ott close behind, and Shumann and Grant pretty well back. And here they are coming in for the first pylon."

The voice was firm, pleasant, assured; it had an American reputation for announcing air meets as other voices had for football or music or prize-fights. A pilot himself, the announcer stood hip high among the caps and horns of the bandstand below the reserved seats, bareheaded, in a tweed jacket even a little over-smart, reminiscent a trifle more of Hollywood Avenue than of Madison, with the modest winged badge of a good solid pilots' fraternity in the lapel and turned a little to face the box seats while he spoke into the microphone as the aeroplanes roared up and banked around the field pylon and faded again in irregular order.

"There's Feinman," Jiggs said. "In the yellow-and-blue

pulpit. The one in the grey suit and the flower. The one with the women. Yair; he'd make lard, now."

"Yes," the taller man said. "Look yonder. Roger is going to take that guy on this next pylon." Although Jiggs did not look at once, the voice did, almost before the taller man spoke, as if it possessed some quality of omniscience beyond even vision:

"Well, well, folks, here's a race that wasn't advertised. It looks like Roger Shumann is going to try to upset the boys' dope. That's him that went up into third place on that pylon then; he has just taken Ott on the lake pylon. Let's watch him now; Mrs. Shumann's here in the crowd somewhere: maybe she knows what Roger's got up his sleeve to-day. A poor fourth on the first pylon and now coming in third on the third lap—oh, oh, oh, look at him take that pylon! If we were all back on the farm now I would say somebody has put a cockleburr under Roger's —well, you know where: maybe it was Mrs. Shumann did it. Good boy, Roger! If you can just hold Ott now because Ott's got the ship on him, folks; I wouldn't try to fool you about that.—No; wait, w-a-i-t.—Folks, he's trying to catch Bullitt; oh, oh, did he take that pylon, folks, he gained three hundred feet on Bullitt on that turn.—Watch now, he's going to try to take Bullitt on the next pylon—there, there, there—watch him, WATCH him. He's beating them on the pylons, folks, because he knows that on the straightaway he hasn't got a chance; oh, oh, oh, watch him now, up there from fourth place in four and a half laps and now he is going to pass Bullitt unless he pulls his wings off on this next.—Here they come in now; oh, oh, oh, Mrs. Shumann's somewhere in the crowd here; maybe she told Roger if he don't come in on the money he needn't come in at all.—There it is, folks; here it is: Myers gets the flag *and* now it's Shumann or Bullitt, Shumann or—— It's Schumann, folks, in as pretty a flown race as you ever watched——"

"There it is," Jiggs said. "Jesus, he better had come in on somebody's money or we'd a all set up in the depot to-night with our bellies thinking our throats was cut. Come on. I'll help you put the 'chutes on." But the taller man was looking up the apron. Jiggs paused too and saw the boy's khaki garment riding

high above the heads below the bandstand, though he could not actually see the woman. The six aeroplanes which for six minutes had followed one another around the course at one altitude and in almost undeviating order like so many beads on a string, were now scattered about the adjacent sky for a radius of two or three miles as if the last pylon had exploded them like so many scraps of paper, jockeying in to land.

"Who's that guy?" the taller man said. "Hanging around Laverne?"

"Lazarus?" Jiggs said. "Jesus, if I was him I would be afraid to use myself. I would be even afraid to take myself out of bed, like I was a cut-glass monkey-wrench or something. Come on. Your guy is already warmed up and waiting for you."

For a moment longer the taller man looked up the apron bleakly. Then he turned. "Go and get the 'chutes and find somebody to bring the sack; I will meet . . ."

"They are already at the ship," Jiggs said. "I done already carried them over. Come on."

The other, moving, stopped dead still. He looked down at Jiggs with a bleak handsome face whose features were regular, brutally courageous, the expression quick if not particularly intelligent, not particularly strong. Under his eyes the faint smudges of dissipation appeared to have been put there by a makeup expert. He wore a narrow moustache above a mouth much more delicate and even feminine than that of the woman whom he and Jiggs called Laverne. "What?" he said. "*You* carried the 'chutes and that sack of flour over to the ship? *You* did?"

Jiggs did not stop. "You're next, ain't you? You're ready to go, ain't you? And it's getting late, ain't it? What are you waiting on? for them to turn on the boundary lights and maybe the floods? or maybe to have the beacon to come in on to land?"

The other walked again, following Jiggs along the apron towards where an aeroplane, a commercial type, stood just without the barrier, its engine running. "I guess you have been to the office and collected my twenty-five bucks and saved me some more time too," he said.

"All right; I'll attend to that too," Jiggs said. "Come on,

The guy's burning gas; he'll be trying to charge you six bucks instead of five if you don't snap it up." They went on to where the aeroplane waited, the pilot already in his cockpit, the already low sun, refracted by the invisible propeller blades, shimmering about the nose of it in a faint copper-coloured nimbus. The two parachutes and the sack of flour lay on the ground beside it. Jiggs held them up one at a time while the other backed into the harness, then he stooped and darted about the straps and buckles like a squirrel, still talking. "Yair, he come in on the money. I guess I will get my hooks on a little jack myself to-night. Jesus, I won't know how to count higher than two bucks."

"But don't try to learn again on my twenty-five," the other said. "Just get it and hold it until I get back."

"What would I want with your twenty-five?" Jiggs said. "With Roger just won thirty per cent. of three hundred and twenty-five, whatever that is. How do you think twenty-five bucks will look beside that?"

"I can tell you a bigger difference still," the other said. "The money Roger won ain't mine but this twenty-five is. Maybe you better not even collect it. I'll attend to that too."

"Yair," Jiggs said, busy, bouncing on his short strong legs, snapping the buckles of the emergency parachute. "Yair, we're jake now. We can eat and sleep again to-night. . . . O.K." He stood back and the other waddled stiffly towards the aeroplane. The checker came up with his pad and took their names and the aeroplane's number and went away.

"Where you want to land?" the pilot said.

"I don't care," the jumper said. "Anywhere in the United States except that lake."

"If you see you're going to hit the lake," Jiggs said, "turn around and go back up and jump again."

They paid no attention to him. They were both looking back and upward towards where in the high drowsy azure there was already a definite alteration towards night. "Should be about dead up there now," the pilot said. "What say I spot you for the hangar roofs and you can slip either way you want."

"All right," the jumper said. "Let's get away from here."

With Jiggs shoving at him he climbed on to the wing and into the front cockpit and Jiggs handed up the sack of flour and the jumper took it on to his lap like it was a child. With his bleak humourless handsome face he looked exactly like the comedy young bachelor caught by his girl while holding a strange infant on a street corner. The aeroplane began to move; Jiggs stepped back as the jumper leaned out, shouting: "Leave that money alone, you hear?"

"Okey doke," Jiggs said. The aeroplane waddled out and on to the runway and turned and stopped; again the bomb, the soft slow bulb of cotton batting flowered against the soft indefinite lake-haze where for a little while still evening seemed to wait before moving in; again the report, the thud and jar twice reverberant against the stands as if the report bounced once before becoming echo. And now Jiggs turned as if he had waited for that signal too and almost parallel he and the aeroplane began to move . . . the stocky purposeful man, and the machine already changing angle and then lifting, banking in a long climbing turn. It was two thousand feet high when Jiggs shoved past the purple-and-gold guards at the main gate and through the throng huddled in the narrow under-pass beneath the reserved seats. Someone plucked at his sleeve.

"When's the guy going to jump out of the parachute?"

"Not until he gets back down here," Jiggs said, butting on past the other purple-and-gold guards and so into the rotunda itself and likewise not into the amplified voice again for the reason that he had never moved out of it:

". . . still gaining altitude now; the ship has a long way to go yet. And then you will see a living man, a man like yourselves—a man like half of yourselves and that the other half of yourselves like, I should say—hurl himself into space and fall for almost four miles before pulling the ripcord of the parachute; by ripcord we mean the trigger that——" Once inside, Jiggs paused, looking swiftly about, breasting now with immobility the now comparatively thin tide which still set towards the apron and talking to itself with one another in voices forlorn, baffled, and amazed:

"What is it now? What are they doing out there now?"

"Fella going to jump ten miles out of a parachute."

"Better hurry too," Jiggs said. "It may open before he can jump out of it." The rotunda, filled with dusk, was lighted now, with a soft sourceless wash of no earthly colour or substance and which cast no shadow: spacious, suave, sonorous and monastic, wherein relief or mural-limning or bronze and chromium skilfully shadow-lurked presented the furious, still, and legendary tale of what man has come to call his conquering of the infinite and impervious air. High overhead the dome of azure glass repeated the mosaiced twin F symbols of the runways to the brass twin F's let into the tile floor and which, bright polished, gleaming, seemed to reflect and find soundless and fading echo in turn monogrammed into the bronze grilling above the ticket-and-information windows and inletted frieze-like into baseboard and cornice of the synthetic stone. "Yair," Jiggs said. "It must have set them back that million. . . . Say, mister, where's the office?" The guard told him; he went to the small discreet door almost hidden in an alcove and entered it and for a time he walked out of the voice though it was waiting for him when, a minute later, he emerged:

". . . still gaining altitude. The boys down here can't tell just how high he is but he looks about right. It might be any time now; you'll see the flour first and then you will know there is a living man falling at the end of it, a living man falling through space at the rate of four hundred feet a second. . . ." When Jiggs reached the apron again (he too had no ticket and so though he could pass from the apron into the rotunda as often as he pleased, he could not pass from the rotunda to the apron save by going around through the hangar) the aeroplane was no more than a trivial and insignificant blemish against the sky which was now definitely that of evening, seeming to hang there without sound or motion. But Jiggs did not look at it. He thrust on among the up-gazing motionless bodies and reached the barrier just as one of the racers was being wheeled in from the field. He stopped one of the crew; the bill was already in his

hand. "Monk, give this to Jackson, will you? For flying that parachute jump. He'll know."

He went back into the hangar, walking fast now and already unfastening his coverall before he pushed through the chicken-wire door. He removed the coverall and hung it up and only for a second glanced at his hands. "I'll wash them when I get to town," he said. Now the first port lights came on; he crossed the plaza, passing the bloomed bloodless grapes on their cast stalks on the quadrate bases of which four F's were discernible even in twilight. The bus was lighted too. It had its quota of passengers though they were not inside. Including the driver they stood beside it, looking up, while the voice of the amplifier, apocryphal, sourceless, inhuman, ubiquitous and beyond weariness or fatigue, went on:

". . . in position now; it will be any time now. . . . There. There. There goes the wing down; he has throttled back now now. Now. . . . There he is, folks; the flour, the flour. . . ." The flour was a faint stain unrolling ribbon-like, light, lazy, against the sky, and then they could see the falling dot at the head of it which, puny, increasing, became the tiny figure of a man plunging without movement towards a single long suspiration of human breath, until at last the parachute bloomed. It unfolded swaying against the accomplished and ineradicable evening; beneath it the jumper oscillated slowly, settling slowly now towards the field. The boundary and obstruction lights were on too now; he floated down as though out of a soundless and breathless void, towards the bright necklace of field lights, and the electrified name on each hangar roof. At the moment the green light above the beacon on the signal tower began to wink and flash too: dot-dot-dash-dot, dot-dot-dash-dot, dot-dot-dash-dot, across the nightbound lake. Jiggs touched the driver's arm.

"Come on, Jack," he said. "I got to be at Grandlieu Street before six o'clock."

An Evening in New Valois

THE down-funnelled light from the desk-lamp struck the reporter across the hips; to the city editor sitting behind the desk the reporter loomed from the hips upward for an incredible distance to where the cadaver face hung against the dusty gloom of the city room's upper spaces, in a green corpse glare as appropriate as water to fish. He saw the raked disreputable hat, the suit that looked as if someone else had just finished sleeping in it, and with one coat pocket sagging with yellow copy paper and from the other protruding, folded, the cold violent still damp black

ALITY OF
BURNED

. . . the entire air and appearance of a last and cheerful stage of what old people call galloping consumption. This was the man whom the editor believed (certainly hoped) to be unmarried, though not through any knowledge or report but because of something which the man's living being emanated—a creature who apparently never had any parents either and who will not be old and never was a child, who apparently sprang full-grown and irrevocably mature out of some violent and instantaneous transition like the stories of dead steamboat men and mules. If it were learned that he had a brother for instance it could create neither warmth nor surprise any more than finding the mate to a discarded shoe in a trashbin. The editor had heard how a girl in a Barricade Street crib said of him that it would be like assessing the invoked spirit at a séance held in a rented restaurant room with a cover-charge.

Upon the desk, in the full target of the lamp's glare, it lay too: the black bold still damp

FIRST FATALITY OF AIR MEET
PILOT BURNED ALIVE

Beyond it, back-flung, shirt-sleeved, his bald head above the green eyeshade corpse glared too, the city editor looked at the reporter fretfully. "You have an instinct for events," he said. "If you were turned into a room with a hundred people you never saw before and two of them were destined to enact a homicide, you would go straight to them as crow to carrion; you would be there from the very first: you would be the one to run out and borrow a pistol from the nearest policeman for them to use. Yet you never seem to bring back anything but information. Oh, you have that, all right, because we seem to get everything that the other papers do and we haven't been sued yet and so doubtless it's all that anyone should expect for five cents and doubtless more than they deserve. But it's not the living breath of news. It's just information. It's dead before you even get back here with it." Immobile beyond the lamp's hard radius the reporter stood, watching the editor with an air leashed, attentive, and alert. "It's like trying to read something in a foreign language. You know it ought to be there; maybe you know by God it is there. But that's all. Can it be by some horrible mischance that without knowing it you listen and see in one language and then do what you call writing in another? How does it sound to you when you read it yourself?"

"When I read what?" the reporter said. Then he sat down in the opposite chair while the editor cursed him. He collapsed upon the chair with a loose dry scarecrow-like clatter as though of his own skeleton and the wooden chair's in contact, and leaned forward across the desk, eager, apparently not only on the verge of the grave itself but in actual sight of the other side of Styx: of the saloons which have never sounded with cash register or till; of that golden District where gleam with frankincense and scented oils the celestial anonymous bosoms of eternal and subsidized delight. "Why didn't you tell me this before?" he cried. "Why didn't you tell me before that this is what you want? Here I have been running my ass ragged eight days a week

trying to find something worth telling and then telling it so it won't make eight thousand different advertisers and subscribers—— But no matter now. Because listen." He jerked off his hat and flung it on to the desk; as quickly the editor snatched it up as if it had been a crust of ant-laden bread on a picnic tablecloth and jerked it back into the reporter's lap. "Listen," the reporter said. "She's out there at the airport. She's got a little boy, only it's two of them, that fly those little ships that look like mosquitoes. No: just one of them flies the ship; the other makes the delayed parachute jump—you know, with the fifty-pound sack of flour and coming down like the haunt of Yuletide or something. Yair; they've got a little boy, about the size of this telephone, in dungarees like they w——"

"What?" the editor cried. "Who have a little boy?"

"Yair. They don't know.—In dungarees like they wear; when I come into the hangar this morning they were clean, maybe because the first day of a meet is the one they call Monday, and he had a stick and he was swabbing grease up off the floor and smearing it on to himself so he would look like they look. . . . Yair, two of them: this guy Shumann that took second money this afternoon, that come up from fourth in a crate that all the guys out there that are supposed to know said couldn't even show. She's his wife, that is her name's Shumann and the kid's is Shumann too: out there in the hangar this morning in dungarees like the rest of them, with her hands full of wrenches and machinery and a gob of cotter keys in her mouth like they tell how women used to do with the pins and needles before General Motors begun to make their clothes for them, with this Harlow-coloured hair that they would pay her money for in Hollywood and a smear of grease where she had swiped it back with her wrist. She's his wife: they have been married almost ever since the kid was born six years ago in a hangar in California. Yair, this day Shumann comes down at whatever town it was in Iowa or Indiana or wherever it was she was a sophomore in the high school back before they had the air mail for farmers to quit ploughing and look up at; in the high school at recess, and so maybe that was why she come out

without a hat evèn and got into the front seat of one of those Jennies the army used to sell them for cancelled stamps or whatever it was. And maybe she sent a postcard back from the next cow pasture to the aunt or whoever it was that was expecting her to come home to dinner, granted that they have kin-folks or are descended from human beings, and he taught her to jump parachutes. Because they ain't human like us; they couldn't turn those pylons like they do if they had human blood and senses and they wouldn't want to or dare to if they just had human brains. Burn them like this one to-night and they don't even holler in the fire; crash one and it ain't even blood when you haul him out: it's cylinder oil the same as in the crank-case.

"And listen: it's both of them; this morning I walk into the hangar where they are getting the ships ready and I see the kid and a guy that looks like a little horse squared off with their fists up and the rest of them watching with wrenches and things in their hands and the kid rushes in flailing his arms and the guy holding him off and the others watching and the guy put the kid down and I come up and square off too with my fists up too and I says, 'Come on, Dempsey. How about taking me on next?' and the kid don't move, he just looks at me and then the guy says, 'Ask him who's his old man,' only I thought he said, 'So's his old man,' and I said, 'So's his old man?' and the guy says, 'No. *Who's* his old man,' and I said it, and here the kid comes with his fists flailing, and if he had just been half as big as he wanted to be right then he would have beat hell out of me. And so I asked them and they told me." He stopped; he ran out of speech or perhaps out of breath not as a vessel runs empty but with the instantaneous cessation of some weightless wind-driven toy, say a celluloid pinwheel. Behind the desk, still back-flung, clutching the chair arms, the editor glared at him with outraged amazement.

"What?" he cried. "Two men, with one wife and child between them?"

"Yair. The third guy, the horse one, is just the mechanic; he ain't even a husband, let alone a flyer. Yair. Shumann and the aeroplane landing at Iowa or Indiana or wherever it is, and

her coming out of the schoolhouse without even arranging to have her books took home, and they went off maybe with a can opener and a blanket to sleep on under the wing of the aeroplane when it rained hard; and then the other guy, the parachute guy, dropping in, falling the couple or three miles with his sack of flour before pulling the ripcord. They ain't human, you see. No ties; no place where you were born and have to go back to it now and then even if it's just only to hate the damn place good and comfortable for a day or two. From coast to coast and Canada in summer and Mexico in winter, with one suitcase and the same can opener because three can live on one can opener as easy as one or twelve.—Wherever they can find enough folks in one place to advance them enough money to get there and pay for the gasoline afterward. Because they don't need money; it ain't money they are after any more than it's glory because the glory can only last until the next race and so maybe it ain't until to-morrow. And they don't need money except only now and then when they come in contact with the human race like in a hotel to sleep or eat now and then or maybe to buy a pair of pants or a skirt to keep the police off of them. Because money ain't that hard to make: it ain't up there, fourteen and a half feet off the ground in a vertical bank around a steel post at two or three hundred miles an hour in a damn gnat built like a Swiss watch that the top speed of ain't just a number on a little dial but where you burn the engine up or fly out from between the wings and the under-carriage. Around the home pylon on one wing-tip and the fabric trembling like a bride and the crate cost four thousand dollars and good for maybe fifty hours if one ever lasted that long and five of them in the race and the top money at least two-hundred-thirty-eight-fifty-two, less fines, fees, commissions and gratuities. And the rest of them, the wives and children and mechanics, standing on the apron and watching like they might have been stole out of a department store window and dressed in greasy khaki coveralls and not even thinking about the hotel bill over in town or where we are going to eat if we don't win and how we are going to get to the next meet if the engine melts and runs backward out of the exhaust pipe.

"And Shumann don't even own a ship; she told me about how they want Vic Chance to build one for them and how Vic Chance wants to build one for Shumann to fly, only neither Vic Chance nor them have managed to save up enough jack yet. So he just flies whatever he can get that they will qualify. This one he copped with to-day he is flying on a commission; it was next to the slowest one in the race and they all said he never had a chance with it and he beat them on the pylons. So when he don't cop they eat on the parachute guy, which is O.K. because the parachute guy makes almost as much as the guy at the microphone does, besides the mike guy having to work all afternoon for his while it don't only take the parachute guy a few seconds to fall the ten or twelve thousand feet with the flour blowing back in his face before pulling the ripcord.

"And so the kid was born on an unrolled parachute in a hangar in California; he got dropped already running like a colt or a calf from the fuselage of an aeroplane, on to something because it happened to be big enough to land on and then take off again. And I thought about him having ancestors and hell and heaven like we have, and birth-pangs to rise up out of and walk the earth with your arm crooked over your head to dodge until you finally get the old blackjack at last and can lay back down again.—All of a sudden I thought about him with a a couple or three sets of grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins somewhere, and I like to died. I had to stop and lean against the hangar wall and laugh. Talk about your immaculate conceptions: born on a unrolled parachute in a California hangar and the doc went to the door and called Shumann and the parachute guy. And the parachute guy got out the dice and says to her 'Do you want to catch these?' and she said 'Roll them' and the dice come out and Shumann rolled high, and that afternoon they fetched the J.P. out on the gasoline truck and so hers and the kid's name is Shumann. And they told me how it wasn't them that started saying 'Who's your old man?" to the kid; it was her, and the kid flailing away at her and her stooping that hard boy's face that looks like any one of the four of them might cut her hair for her with a pocket knife when it needs it, down

to where he can reach it and saying 'Hit me. Hit me hard. Harder. Harder.' And what do you think of that?"

He stopped again. The editor sat back in the swivel chair and drew a deep, full, deliberate breath while the reporter leaned above the desk like a dissolute and eager skeleton, with that air of worn and dreamy fury which Don Quixote must have had.

"I think you ought to write it," the editor said. The reporter looked at him for almost half a minute without moving.

"Ought to write——" He murmured. "Ought to write . . ." His voice died away in ecstasy; he glared down at the editor in bone-light exultation while the editor watched him in turn with cold and vindictive waiting.

"Yes. Go home and write it."

"Go home and . . . Home, where I won't be dis—— where I can . . . O pal, o pal, o pal! Chief, where have I been all your life or where have you been all mine?"

"Yes," the editor said. He had not moved. "Go home and lock yourself in and throw the key out the window and write it." He watched the gaunt ecstatic face before him in the dim corpse glare of the green shade. "And then set fire to the room." The reporter's face sank slowly back, like a Halloween mask on a boy's stick being slowly withdrawn. Then for a long time he too did not move save for a faint working of the lips as if he were tasting something either very good or very bad. Then he rose slowly, the editor watching him; he seemed to collect and visibly reassemble himself bone by bone and socket by socket. On the desk lay a pack of cigarettes. He reached his hand towards it; as quickly as when he had flung back the hat and without removing his gaze from the reporter's face, the editor snatched the pack away. The reporter lifted from the floor his disreputable hat and stood gazing into it with musing attention, as though about to draw a lot from it. "Listen," the editor said; he spoke patiently, almost kindly: "The people who own this paper or who direct its policies or anyway who pay the salaries, fortunately or unfortunately I shan't attempt to say, have no Lewises or Hemingways or even Tchekovs on the staff: one very good reason doubtless being that they do not want them,

since what they want is not fiction, not even Nobel Prize fiction, but news.

"You mean you don't believe this?" the reporter said. "About h—— these guys?"

"I'll go you better than that: I don't even care. Why should I find news in this woman's supposed bed habits as long as her legal (so you tell me) husband does not?"

"I thought that women's bed habits were always news," the reporter said.

"You thought? You thought? You listen to me a minute. If one of them takes his aeroplane or his parachute and murders her and the child in front of the grand-stand, then it will be news. But until they do, what I am paying you to bring back here is not what you think about somebody out there nor what you heard about somebody out there nor even what you saw: I expect you to come in here to-morrow night with an accurate account of everything that occurs out there to-morrow that creates any reaction excitement or irritation on any human retina; if you have to be twins or triplets or even a regiment to do this, be so. Now you go on home and go to bed. And remember. Remember. There will be someone out there to report to me personally at my home the exact moment at which you enter the gates. And if that report comes to me one minute after ten o'clock, you will need a racing aeroplane to catch your job Monday morning. Go home. Do you hear me?" The reporter looked at him, without heat, perfectly blank, as if he had ceased several moments ago not alone to listen but even to hear, as though he were now watching the editor's lips courteously to tell when he had finished.

"O.K., chief," he said. "If that's the way you feel about it."

"That's exactly the way I feel about it. Do you understand?"

"Yair; sure. Good night."

"Good night," the editor said. The reporter turned away; he turned away quietly, putting the hat on his head exactly as he had laid it on the editor's desk before the editor flung it off, and took from the pocket containing the folded newspaper a crumpled cigarette pack. The editor watched him put the cigarette into his

mouth and then tug the incredible hat to a raked dissolute angle as he passed out the door, raking the match across the frame as he disappeared. But the first match broke; the second one he struck on the bell-plate while the elevator was rising. The door opened and clashed behind him; already his hand was reaching into his pocket while with the other he lifted the top paper from the shallow stack on the second stool beside the one on which the elevator man sat, sliding the face-down dollar watch which weighted it on to the next one, the same, the identical: black harsh and restrained:

FIRST FATALITY OF AIR MEET
PILOT BURNED ALIVE

Lieut. Frank Burnham in Crash of Rocket Plane

He held the paper off, his face tilted aside, his eyes squinted against the smoke. " 'Shumann surprises spectators by beating Bullitt for second place,' " he read. "What do you think of that, now?"

"I think they are all crazy," the elevator man said. He had not looked at the reporter again. He received the coin into the same hand which clutched a dead stained cob pipe, not looking at the other. "Them that do it and them that pay money to see it." Neither did the reporter look at him.

"Yair; surprised," the reporter said, looking at the paper. Then he folded it and tried to thrust it into the pocket with the other folded one just like it. "Yair. And in one more lap he would have surprised them still more by beating Myers for first place." The cage stopped. "Yair; surprised. . . . What time is it?" With the hand which now held both the coin and the pipe the elevator man lifted the face-down watch and held it out. He said nothing, he didn't even look at the reporter; he just sat there, waiting, holding the watch out with a kind of weary patience like a house guest showing his watch to the last of several children. "Two minutes past ten?" the reporter said. "Just two minutes past ten? Hell."

"Get out of the door," the elevator man said. "There's a

draught in here." It clashed behind the reporter again; as he crossed the lobby he tried again to thrust the paper into the pocket with the other one. Antic, repetitive, his reflection in the glass street doors glared and flicked away. The street was empty, though even here, fourteen minutes afoot from Grandlieu Street, the February darkness was murmurous with faint uproar, with faint and ordered pandemonium. Overhead, beyond the palm tufts, the overcast sky reflected that interdict and light-glared canyon now adrift with serpentine and confetti, through which the floats, bearing grimacing and antic mimes dwarfed chalk white and forlorn and contemplated by static kerb mass of amazed confetti faces, passed as though through steady rain. He walked, not fast exactly but with a kind of loose and purposeless celerity, as though it were not exactly faces that he sought but solitude that he was escaping, or even as if he actually were going home like the editor had told him, thinking already of Grandlieu Street which he would have to cross somehow in order to do so. "Yah," he thought, "he should have sent me home by air mail." As he passed from light to light his shadow in midstride resolved, pacing him, on pavement and wall. In a dark plate window, sidelooking, he walked beside himself; stopping and turning so that for the moment shadow and reflection superposed, he stared full at himself as though he still saw the actual shoulder sagging beneath the dead afternoon's phantom burden, and saw reflected beside him yet the sweater and the skirt and the harsh pallid hair as, bearing upon his shoulder the arch-fathered, he walked beside the oblivious and arch-adulteress.

"Yah," he thought, "the damn little yellow-headed bastard. . . . Yair, going to bed, now, to sleep; the three of them in one bed or maybe they take it night about or maybe you just put your hat down on it first like in a barber shop." He faced himself in the dark glass, long and light and untidy as a bundle of laths dressed in human garments. "Yah," he thought, "the poor little tow-headed son of a bitch." When he moved it was to recoil from an old man almost overwalked—a face, a stick, a suit filthier even than his own. He extended the two folded papers

along with the coin. "Here, pop," he said. "Maybe you can get another dime for these. You can buy a big beer then."

When he reached Grandlieu Street he discovered that the only way he could cross it would be by air, though even now he had not actually paused to decide whether he were really going home or not. And this, not alone because of police regulations but because of the physical kerb mass of heads and shoulders in moiling silhouette against the light glare, the serpentine and confetti-drift, the antic passing floats. But even before he reached the corner he was assailed by a gust of screaming newsboys apparently as oblivious to the moment's significance as birds are aware yet oblivious to the human doings which their wings brush and their droppings fall upon. They swirled about him, screaming: in the reflected light of the passing torches the familiar black thick type and the raucous cries seemed to glare and merge faster than the mind could distinguish the sense through which each had been received: "Boinum Boins!" FIRST FATALITY OF AIR. "Read about it! Foist Moidigror foitality!" LIEUT. BURNHAM KILLED IN AIR CRASH. "Boinum Boins!"

"Naw!" the reporter cried. "Beat it! Should I throw away a nickel like it was into the ocean because another lunatic has fried himself?—Yah," he thought, vicious, savage, "even they will have to sleep some of the time just to pass that much of the dark half of being alive. Not to rest because they have to race again to-morrow, but because like now air and space ain't passing them fast enough and time is passing them too fast to rest in except during the six and a half minutes it takes to go the twenty-five miles, and the rest of them standing there on the apron like that many window dummies because the rest of them ain't even there, like in the girls' school where one of them is gone off first with all the fine clothes. Yair, alive only for six and a half minutes a day in one aeroplane. And so every night they sleep in one bed, and why shouldn't either of them or both of them at once come drowsing unawake in one woman-drowsing and none of the three of them know which one nor care? . . . Yah," he thought, "maybe I was going home, after all." Then

he saw Jiggs, the pony man, the man-pony of the afternoon, recoiled now into the centre of a small violent backwater of motionless back-turned faces.

"Why don't you use your own feet to walk on?" Jiggs snarled.

"Excuse me," one of the faces said. "I didn't mean . . ."

"Well, watch yourself," Jiggs cried. "Mine have got to last me to the end of my life. And likely even then I will have to walk a ways before I can catch a ride." The reporter watched him stand on alternate legs and scrub at his feet in turn with his cap, presenting to the smoky glare of the passing torches a bald spot neat as a tonsure and the colour of saddle leather. As they stood side by side and looked at one another they resembled the tall and the short man of the orthodox and unfailing comic team—the one looking like a cadaver out of a medical school vat and dressed for the moment in garments out of a flood refugee warehouse, the other filling his clothing without any fraction of surplus cloth which might be pinched between two fingers, with that trim vicious economy of wrestlers' tights. Again Jiggs thought, since it had been good the first time, "Jesus. Don't they open the graveyards until midnight either?" About the two of them now the newsboys hovered and screamed:

"Globe Stoytsman! Boinum boins!"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Burn to death on Thursday night or starve to death on Friday morning. So this is Moddy Graw. Why ain't I where I have been all my life." But the reporter continued to glare down at him in bright amazement.

"At the Terrebonne?" he said. "She told me this afternoon you all had some rooms down in French town. You mean to tell me that just because he won a little money this afternoon he has got to pick up and move over to the hotel this time of night when he ought to been in bed an hour ago so he can fly to-morrow?"

"I don't mean nothing, mister," Jiggs said. "I just said I saw Roger and Laverne go into that hotel up the street a minute ago. I never asked them what for. . . . How about that cigarette?" The reporter gave it to him from the crumpled pack. Beyond the barricade of heads and shoulders, in the ceaseless rain of

confetti, the floats moved past with an air esoteric, almost apocryphal, without inference of motion, like an inhabited archipelago putting out to sea on a flood tide. And now another newsboy, a new face, young, ageless, the teeth gaped raggedly as though he had found them one by one over a period of years about the streets, shrieked at them a new sentence like a kind of desperate ace:

"Laughing Boy in fit at Woishndon Poik!"

"Yair!" the reporter cried, glaring down at Jiggs. "Because you guys don't need to sleep. You ain't human. I reckon the way he trains for a meet is to stay out on the town all the night before. Besides that—what was it?—thirty per cent. of three hundred and twenty-five dollars he won this afternoon. . . . Come on," he said. "We won't have to cross the street."

"I thought you were going home so fast," Jiggs said.

"Yair," the reporter cried back over his shoulder, seeming not to penetrate the static human mass but to filter through it like a phantom, without alteration or diminution of bulk; now, turned sideways to cry back at Jiggs, passing between the individual bodies like a playing card, he cried, "I have to sleep at night. I ain't a racing pilot; I ain't got an aeroplane to sleep in; I can't concentrate twenty-five miles of space at three miles an hour into six and a half minutes. Come on." The hotel was not far and the side, the carriage, entrance was comparatively clear in the outfalling of light beneath a suave canopy with its lettered frieze: Hotel Terrebonne. Above this from a jack-staff hung an oilcloth painted tabard: Headquarters, American-Aeronautical Association. Dedication Meet, Feinman Airport. "Yair," the reporter cried, "they'll be here. Here's where to find guys that don't aim to sleep at the hotel. Yair; tiered identical cubicles of one thousand rented sleepings. And if you just got jack enough to last out the night you don't even have to go to bed."

"Did what?" Jiggs said, already working over towards the wall beside the entrance. "Oh. Teared Q pickles. Yair; of one thousand rented . . . if you got the jack too. I got the Q pickle all right. I got enough for one thousand. And if I just had the jack too it wouldn't be teared. How about another cigarette?"

The reporter gave him another one from the crumpled pack. Jiggs now stood against the wall. "I'll wait here," he said.

"Come on in," the reporter said. "They are bound to be here. It will be after midnight before they even find out that Grandlieu Street has been closed. . . . That's a snappy pair of boots you got on there."

"Yair," Jiggs said. He looked down at his right foot again. "At least he wasn't a football player or maybe driving a truck. . . . I'll wait here. You can give me a call if Roger wants me." The reporter went on; Jiggs stood again on his left leg and scrubbed at his right instep with his cap. "What a town," he thought. "Where you got to wear a street closed sign on your back to walk around in it."

"Because at least I am a reporter until one minute past ten to-morrow," the reporter thought, mounting the shallow steps towards the lobby; "he said so himself. I reckon I will have to keep on being one until then. Because even if I am fired now, at this minute while I walk here, there won't be anybody for him to tell to take my name off the pay roll until noon to-morrow. So I can tell him it was my conscience. I can call him from the hotel here and tell him my conscience would not let me go home and go to sleep." He recoiled, avoiding here also the paper plumage, the parrot mask, a mixed party, whisky-and-gin reeking, and then gone, leaving behind them the draggled cumulant hillocks of trampled confetti minching across the tile floor before the minching pans and brooms of paid monkey-men who for three nights now will do little else; they vanished, leaving the reporter for the instant marooned beside the same easel-plat with which the town bloomed—the photographs of man and machine each above its neat legend:

MATT ORD, NEW VALOIS. HOLDER, WORLD'S LAND PLANE SPEED RECORD

AL MYERS. CALEXCO

JIMMY OTT. CALEXCO

R. Q. BULLITT. WINNER GRAVES TROPHY, MIAMI, FLA

LIEUT. FRANK BURNHAM

And here also the cryptic shield caught (i n r i) loops of bunting giving an appearance temporary and tentlike to interminable long corridors of machine plush and gilded synthetic plaster running between anonymous and rentable spaces or alcoves from sunrise to sunset across America, between the nameless faience woman-face behind the phallic ranks of cigars and the stuffed chairs sentinelled each by its spittoon and potted palm;—the congruous stripe of Turkey red beneath the recent-gleamed and homeless shoes running on into an interval of implacable circumspection: a silent and discreet inference of lysol and a bath—billboard stage and vehicle for what in the old lusty days called themselves drummers: among the brass spittoons of elegance and the potted palms of decorum, legion homeless and symbolic: the immemorial flying buttresses of ten million American Saturday nights, with shrewd heads filled with to-morrow's cosmic alterations in the form of price lists and the telephone numbers of discontented wives and high-school girls. "Until time to take the elevator up and telephone the bellhop for gals," the reporter thought.

But the lobby to-night was crowded with more than these; already he saw them fallen definitely into two distinct categories: the one in Madison Avenue jackets, who perhaps once held transport ratings and perhaps still holds them, like the manufacturer who once wrote himself mechanic or clerk retains in the new chromium Geddes sanctuary the ancient primary die or mimeograph machine with which he started out, and perhaps have now only the modest Q.B. wings which clip to the odorous lapel the temperate silk ribbon stencilled Judge or Official, without the transport rating and perhaps the ribbon and the tweed but not even the wings; and the other with faces both sober and silent because they cannot drink to-night and fly to-morrow and have never learned to talk at any time, in blue serge cut apparently not only from the same bolt but folded at the same crease on the same shelf, who hold the severe transport rating and are here to-night by virtue of painfully drummed charter trips from a hundred little nameless bases known only to the Federal Department of Commerce, and whose equipment

consists of themselves and a mechanic and one aeroplane which is not new. The reporter thrust on among them, with that semblance of filtering rather than passing. "Yair," he thought, "you don't need to look. It's the smell, you can tell the bastards because they smell like pressing clubs instead of Harris tweed."

Then he saw her, standing beside a Spanish jar filled with sand pocked by chewing gum and cigarettes and burnt matches, in a brown worn hat and a stained trench-coat from whose pocket protruded a folded newspaper. "Yah," he thought, "because a trench-coat will fit anybody and so they can have two of them and then somebody can always stay at home with the kid." When he approached her she looked full at him for a moment, with pale blank complete unrecognition, so that while he crossed the crowded lobby towards her and during the subsequent three hours while at first he and she and Shumann and Jiggs, and later the little boy and the parachute jumper too, sat crowded in the taxicab while he watched the implacable meter figures compound, he seemed to walk solitary and chill and without progress down a steel corridor like a fly in a gun barrel, thinking, "Yah, Hagood told me to go home and I never did know whether I intended to go or not. But Jiggs told me she would be at the hotel, but I didn't believe that at all"; thinking (while the irrevoçable figures clocked and clicked beneath the dim insistent bulb and the child slept on his bony lap and the other four smoked the cigarette which he had bought for them and the cab spun along the dark swamp-smelling shell road out to the airport and then back to town again)—thinking how he had not expected to see her again because to-morrow and to-morrow do not count because that will be at the field, with air and earth full of snarling and they not even alive out there because they are not human. But not like this, in clad decorous attitudes that the police will not even look once at, in the human night world of half-past ten o'clock and then eleven and then twelve: and then behind a million separate secret closed doors we will slack ourselves profoundly defenceless on our backs, opened for the profound unsleeping, the inescapable and compelling flesh. Standing there beside the Basque chamber pot at twenty-two minutes past ten

because one of her husbands flew this afternoon in a crate that three years ago was all right, that three years ago was so all right that ever since all the others have had to conjoin as one in order to keep it so that the word 'race' would still apply, so that now they cannot quit because if they once slow down they will be overreached and destroyed by their own spawning, like the Bornean what's-its-name that has to spawn running to keep from being devoured by its own litter. "Yah," he thought, "standing there waiting so he can circulate in his blue serge suit and the other trench-coat among the whisky and the tweed when he ought to be at what they call home in bed except they ain't human and don't have to sleep"; thinking how it seems that he can bear either of them, either one of them alone. "Yair," he thought, "tiered Q pickles of one thousand . . . nights. They will have to hurry before anybody can go to bed with her," walking straight into the pale cold blank gaze which waked only when he reached his hand and drew the folded paper from the trench-coat's pocket.

"Dempsey asleep, huh?" he said, opening the paper, the page which he could have recited off-hand before he even looked at it:

BURNHAM BURNS

VALOISIAN CLAIMS LOVENEST FRAMEUP

Myers Easy Winner in Opener at Feinman Airport

Laughing Boy in Fifth at Washington Park

"No news is good newspaper news," he said, folding the paper again. "Dempsey in bed, huh?"

"Yes," she said. "Keep it. I've seen it." Perhaps it was his face. "Oh, I remember. You work on a paper yourself. Is it this one? or did you tell me?"

"Yair," he said. "I told you. No, it ain't this one." Then he turned too, though she had already spoken.

"This is the one that bought Jack the ice-cream to-day," she said. Shumann wore the blue serge, but there was no trench-coat. He wore a new grey homburg hat, not raked like in the department store cuts but set square on the back of his head so that

(not tall, with blue eyes in a square thin profoundly sober face) he looked out not from beneath it but from within it with open and fatal humourlessness, like an early Briton who has been assured that the Roman governor will not receive him unless he wear the borrowed centurion's helmet. He looked at the reporter for a single unwinking moment even blanker than the woman's had been.

"Nice race you flew in there to-day," the reporter said.

"Yair?" Shumann said. Then he looked at the woman. The reporter looked at her too. She had not moved, yet she now stood in a more complete and somehow terrific immobility, in the stained trench-coat, a cigarette burning in the grained and black-rimmed fingers of one hand, looking at Shumann with naked and urgent concentration. "Come on," Shumann said. "Let's go." But she did not move.

"You didn't get it," she said. "You couldn't——"

"No. They don't pay off until Saturday night," Shumann said. ("Yah," the reporter thought, clashing the tight hermetic door behind him as the automatic dome light came on; "ranked coffin cubicles of dead tail; the Great American in one billion printings slave post-chained and scribble-scrawled: annotations of eternal electro deitch and bottom hope.")

"Deposit five cents for three minutes, please," the bland machine voice chanted. The metal stalk sweat-clutched, the gutta-percha bloom cupping his breathing back at him, he listened, fumbled, counting as the discreet click and cling died into wire hum.

"That's five," he bawled. "Hear them? Five nickels. Now don't cut me off in three hundred and eighty-one seconds and tell me to . . . Hello," he bawled, crouching, clutching the metal stalk as if he hung by it from the edge of a swimming pool; "listen. Get this. . . . Yair. At the Terrebonne. . . . Yair, after midnight; I know. Listen. Chance for the goddamn paper to do something at last beside run our ass ragged between what Grandlieu Street kikes tell us to print in their half of the paper and tell you what you can't print in our half and still find something to fill the blank spaces under Connotator of the

World's Doings and Moulder of the Peoples' Thought, ha ha ha ha. . . ."

"What?" the editor cried. "Terrebonne Hotel? I told you when you left here three hours ago to——"

"Yair," the reporter said. "Almost three hours, that's all. Just a taxi ride to get to the other side of Grandlieu Street first, and then out to the airport and back because they don't have but a hundred beds for visiting pilots out there and General Behindman needs all of them for his reception. And so we come on back to the hotel because this is where they all are to tell him to come back Saturday night provided the bastard don't kill him to-morrow or Saturday. And you can thank whatever tutelary ass scratcher you consider presides over the fate destiny and blunders of that office that me or somebody happened to come in here despite the fact that this is the logical place to find what we laughingly call news at ten o'clock at night, what with half the air-meet proprietors getting drunk here and all of Mardi Gras already drunk here. And him that ought to been in bed three hours ago because he's got to race again to-morrow only he can't race to-morrow because he can't go to bed yet because he hasn't got any money to hire a place with a floor in it because he only won thirty per cent. of three hundred and twenty-five dollars this afternoon, and to the guys that own an air meet that ain't no more than a borrowed umbrella and the parachute guy can't do them any good now because Jiggs collected his twenty bucks and——"

"What? What? Are you drunk?"

"No. Listen. Just stop talking a minute and listen. When I saw her out at the airport to-day they were all fixed up for the night like I tried to tell you, but you said it was not news; yair, like you said, whether a man sleeps or not or why he can't sleep ain't news but only what he does while he ain't asleep, provided of course that what he does is what the guys that are ordained to pick and choose it consider news. Yair, I tried to tell you, but I'm just a poor bastard of an ambulance chaser: I ain't supposed to know news when I see it at thirty-five bucks a week or I'd be getting more. . . . Where was I? O yair—— Had a room for

to-night because they have been here since Wednesday and so they must have had somewhere that they could lock the door and take off some of their clothes or at least put the trench-coat down and lay down themselves, because they had shaved somewhere: Jiggs has got a slash on his jaw that even at a barber college you don't get one like it. So they were all fixed up, only I never asked them what hotel, because I knew it would not have a name, just a sign on the gallery post that the old man made on Saturday when his sciatica felt good enough for him to go down town only she wouldn't let him leave until he made the sign and nailed it up: and so what was the use in me having to say, 'What street did you say? Where is that?' because I ain't a racing pilot, I am a reporter ha ha ha and so I would not know where these places are. Yair, all fixed up, and so he come in on the money this afternoon and I was standing there holding the kid and she says, 'There,' just like that: 'There.' And then I know that she has not moved during the whole six and a half minutes or maybe six and forty-nine-fifty-two ten thousandths or whatever the time was; she just says 'There,' like that, and so it was O.K. even when he come in from the field with the ship and we couldn't find Jiggs to help roll the ship into the hangar, and he just says, 'Chasing a skirt, I guess,' and we put the ship away and he went to the office to get his one-O-seven-fifty and we stayed there waiting for the parachute guy to come down, and he did and wiped the flour out of his eyes and says, 'Where's Jiggs?' 'Why?' she says. 'Why?' he says. 'He went to collect my money,' and she says, 'My God——' "

"Listen! Listen to me!" the editor cried. "Listen!"

"Yair, the mechanic. In a pair of britches that must have zippers so he can take them off at night like you would peel two bananas, and the tops of a pair of boots riveted under the insteps of a pair of tennis shoes. He collected the parachute guy's twenty-five bucks for him while the parachute guy was still on the way back from work because the parachute guy gets twenty-five berries for the few seconds it takes except for the five bucks he has to pay the transport pilot to take him to the office you might say, and the eight cents a pound for the flour

only to-day the flour was already paid for and so the whole twenty bucks was velvet. And Jiggs collected it and beat it because they owed him some jack and he thought that since Shumann had won the race that he would win the actual money too like the programme said and not only be able to pay last night's bill at the whore house where they——"

"Will you listen to me? Will you? Will you?"

"Yair; sure. I'm listening. So I come on to Grandlieu Street thinking about how you had told me to go home and wr—— go home, and wondering how in hell you expected me to get across Grandlieu between then and midnight, and all of a sudden I hear this excitement and cursing and it is Jiggs where some guy has stepped on his foot and put a scratch on one of them new boots, only I don't get it then. He just tells me he saw her and Shumann going into the Terrebonne because that was all he knew himself; I don't reckon he stayed to hear much when he beat it back to town with the parachute guy's jack and bought the boots and then walked in them to where they had just got in from the field and Shumann had tried to collect his one-O-seven-fifty but they wouldn't pay him. So I couldn't cross Grandlieu and so we walked on to the Terrebonne even though this is the last place in town a reporter's got any business being half-past ten at night, what with all the air meet getting drunk here, and half of Mardi Gras already—but never mind; I already told you that. So we come on over and Jiggs won't come in and still I don't get it, even though I had noticed the boots. So I come in and there she is, standing by this greaser chamber pot and the lobby full of drunk guys with ribbon badges and these kind of coats that look like they need a shave bad, and the guys all congratulating one another about how the airport cost a million dollars and how maybe in the three days more they could find out how to spend another million and make it balance. And he come up, Shumann come up, and her stiller than the pot even and looking at him, and he says they don't pay off until Saturday and she says, 'Did you try? Did you try?' Yair, trying to collect an instalment on the hundred and seven bucks so they can go to bed, with the kid already asleep on the sofa in the madam's room

and the parachute guy waiting with him if he happened to wake pu. And so they walked up to the hotel from Amboise Street because it ain't far, they are both inside the city limits, to collect something on the money he was under the delusion he had won and I said 'Amboise Street?' because in the afternoon she just said they had a room down in French town and she said 'Amboise Street' looking at me without batting an eye, and if you don't know what kind of bedding houses they have on Amboise Street your son or somebody ought to tell you: yair, you rent the bed and the two towels and furnish your own cover. So they went to Amboise Street and got a room; they always do that because in the Amboise Streets you can sleep to-night and pay to-morrow because a whore will leave a kid sleep on credit. Only they hadn't paid for last night yet and so to-night they don't want to take up the bed again for nothing, what with the air meet in town, let alone the natural course of Mardi Gras. So they left the kid asleep on the madam's sofa and they come on to the hotel and Shumann said they don't pay off until Saturday and I said 'Never mind; I got Jiggs outside' and they never even looked at me. Because I hadn't got it then, that Jiggs had spent the money, you see: and so we went out to the taxi and Jiggs was still standing there against the wall and Shumann looked at him and says 'You can come on too. If I could eat them I would have done it at dinner time' and Jiggs comes and gets in too, kind of sidling over and then ducking into the cab like it was a hen house and hunkering down on the little seat with his feet under him and I still don't get it even yet, not even when Shumann says to him 'You better find a manhole to stand in until Jack gets into the cab.' So we got in and Shumann says 'We can walk' and I says 'Where? Out to Lanier Avenue to get across Grandlieu?' and so that was the first dollar-eighty and we eased up as soon as the door got unclogged a little; yair, they were having a rush; and we went in and there the kid was, awake now and eating a sandwich the madam had sent out for, and the madam and a little young whore and the whore's fat guy in his shirt sleeves and his galluses down, playing with the kid and the fat guy wanting to buy the kid a beer and the kid

setting there and telling them how his old man flew the best pylon in America and Jiggs hanging back in the hall and jerking at my elbow until I could hear what he was whispering: 'Say, listen. Find my bag and open it and you will find a pair of tennis shoes and a paper package that feels like it's got a . . . a . . . well, a bootjack in it and hand them out to me, will you?' and I says 'What? A what in it?' and then the parachute guy in the room says 'Who's that out there? Jiggs?' and nobody answered and the parachute guy says 'Come in here' and Jiggs kind of edged into the door where the parachute guy could just see his face and the guy says 'Come on' and Jiggs edges a little further in and the guy says 'Come on' and Jiggs edges into the light then, with his chin between his shirt pockets and his head turned to one side and the guy looking him slow from feet to his head and then back again and says 'The son of a bitch' and the madam says 'I think so myself. The idea of them dirty bastard kikes holding him up on a purchase of that size for just forty cents' and the parachute guy says 'Forty cents?' Yair, it was like this. The boots was twenty-two-fifty. Jiggs paid down two dollars and a dime on them and he had to pay the parachute guy's pilot five bucks and so he never had but twenty bucks left even when he beat the bus, and so he borrowed the forty cents from the madam; yair, he left the airport at five-thirty and did all that before the store closed at six; he got there just in time to stick one of the tennis shoes into the door before it shut. So we paid the madam and that was the next five-forty because the room for last night she just charged them three bucks for because they set in her room so she could use the other one for business until midnight when the rush slacked up and so she just charged them three bucks just to use the room to sleep in and the other two bucks was bus fare. And we had the kid and the parachute guy too now, but the driver said it would be O.K. because it would be a long haul out to the airport. The programme said there was accommodations for a hundred visiting pilots out there and if there was more than two or three missing from the lobby of the Terrebonne it was because they was just lost and hadn't come in yet, and besides you had told me you would fire me if I wasn't

out there at daylight to-morrow morning . . . no; to-day now . . . and it was eleven then, almost to-morrow then, and besides it would save the paper the cab fare for me back to town. Yair, that's how I figured too because it seems like I ain't used to air meets either and so we took all the baggage, both of them and Jiggs' meal sack too, and went out there and that was the next two dollars and thirty-five cents, only the kid was asleep again by that time and so maybe one of the dollars was Pullman extra fare. And there was a big crowd still there, standing around and looking at the air where this guy Burnham had flew in it and at the scorched hole in the field where he had flew in that too, and we couldn't stay out there because they only got beds for a hundred visiting pilots and Colonel Feinman is using all of them for his reception. Yair, reception. You build the airport and you get some receptive women and some booze and you lock the entrances and the information and ticket windows and if they don't put any money into the tops of their stockings, it's a reception. So they can't sleep out there and so we come on back to town and that's that next two dollars and sixty-five cents because we left the first cab go and we had to telephone for another one and the telephone was a dime and the extra twenty cents was because we didn't stop at Amboise Street, we come on to the hotel because they are still here and he can still ask them for his jack, still believing the air racing is a kind of sports or something run by men that have got time to stop at almost one o'clock in the morning and count up what thirty per cent. of three hundred and twenty-five dollars is and give it to him for no other reason than that they told him they would if he would do something first. And so now is the chance for this connotator of the world's doings and moulder of the people's thought to . . ."

"Deposit five cents for three minutes, please," the bland machine voice said. In the airless cuddy the reporter coin-fumbled, sweat-clutching the telephone; again the discreet click and cling died into dead wire hum.

"Hello! Hello!" he bawled. "You cut me off; gimme my . . ." But now the buzzing on the editor's desk has sounded again;

now the interval out of outraged and apoplectic waiting: the wire hum clicked full voiced before the avalanched, the undammed:

"Fired! Fired! Fired! Fired!" the editor screamed. He leaned half-way across the desk beneath the green-shaded light, telephone and receiver clutched to him like a tackled half-back lying half across the goal line, as he had caught the instrument up; as, sitting bolt upright in the chair, his knuckles white on the arms and his teeth glinting under his lips while he glared at the telephone in fixed and waiting fury, he had sat during the five minutes since putting the receiver carefully back and waiting for the buzzer to sound again. "Do you hear me?" he screamed.

"Yair," the reporter said. "Listen. I wouldn't even bother with that son of a bitch Feinman at all; you can have the right guy paged right here in the lobby. Or listen. You don't even need to do that. All they need is just a few dollars to eat and sleep until to-morrow; just call the desk and tell them to let me draw on the paper; I will just add the eleven-eighty I had to spend to——"

"WILL you listen to me?" the editor said. "Please! Will you?"

—"to ride out there and—Huh? Sure. Sure, chief. Shoot."

The editor gathered himself again; he seemed to extend and lie a little further and flatter across the desk even as the back, with the goal safe, tries for an extra inch while already downed; now he even ceased to tremble. "No," he said; he said it slowly and distinctly. "No. Do you understand? NO." Now he too heard only dead wire hum, as if the other end of it extended beyond atmosphere, into cold space; as though he listened now to the profound sound of infinity, of void itself filled with the cold unceasing murmur of æon-weary and unflagging stars. Into the round target of light a hand slid the first to-morrow's galley; the still damp neat row of boxes which in the paper's natural order had no scare-head, containing, since there was nothing new in them since time began, likewise no alarm:—that cross-section out of time space as though of a light ray caught by a speed lens for a second's fraction between infinity and furious and trivial dust:

FARMERS REFUSE BANKERS DENY STRIKERS DEMAND PRESIDENT'S YACHT ACREAGE REDUCTION QUINTUPLETS GAIN EX-SENATOR RENAUD CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY AS RESTAURATEUR

Now the wire hum came to life.

"You mean you won't . . ." the reporter said. "You ain't going to . . ."

"No. No. I won't even attempt to explain to you why I will not or cannot. Now listen. Listen carefully. You are fired. Do you understand? You don't work for this paper. You don't work for anyone this paper knows. If I should learn to-morrow that you do, so help me God I will tear their advertisement out with my own hands. Have you a telephone at home?"

"No. But there's one at the corner; I co——"

"Then go home. And if you call this office or this building again to-night I will have you arrested for vagrancy. Go home."

"All right, chief. If that's how you feel about it, O.K. We'll go home; we got a race to fly to-morrow, see?—Chief! Chief!"

"Yes?"

"What about my eleven-eighty? I was still working for you when I sp——"

Night in the Vieux Carré

Now they could cross Grandlieu Street. There was traffic in it now; to clash and clang of light and bell, trolley and automobile crashed and glared across the intersection, rushing in a light kerb-channelled spindrift of tortured and draggled serpentine and trodden confetti pending the dawn's white wings—spent tinsel dung of Momus' Nile barge clatterfalque. Ordered and marked by light and bell and carrying the two imitation-leather bags and the drill meal sack they could now cross, the four others watching the reporter who, the little boy still asleep on his shoulder, stood at the extreme of the kerb edge's channel brim, in poised and swooping immobility like a scarecrow weathered gradually out of the earth which had supported it erect and intact and now poised for the first light vagrant air to blow it into utter dissolution. He translated himself into a kind of flapping gallop, gaining fifteen or twenty feet on the others before they could move, passing athwart the confronting glares of automobiles apparently without contact with earth, like one of those apocryphal night-time bat creatures whose nest or home no man ever saw, which are seen only in mid-swoop, caught for a second in a light beam between nothing and nowhere. "Somebody take Jack from him," the woman said. "I am afr——"

"Of him?" the parachute jumper said, carrying one of the bags, his other hand under her elbow. "A guy would no more hit him than he would a glass barber pole. Or a paper sack of empty beer bottles in the street."

"He might fall down, though, and cut the kid all to pieces," Jiggs said. Then he said (it was still good, it pleased him no less even though this was the third time): "When he gets to the other side he might find out that they have opened the cemetery, too, and that would not be so good for Jack." He

handed the sack to Shumann and passed the woman and the jumper, stepping quick on his short bouncing legs, the boots twinkling in the aligned tense immobility of the head-lights and overtook the reporter and reached up for the boy. "Gimme," he said. The reporter glared down at him without stopping, with a curious glazed expression like that of one who has not slept much lately.

"I got him," he said. "He ain't heavy."

"Yair; sure," Jiggs said, dragging the still sleeping boy down from the other's shoulder like a bolt of wing fabric from a shelf as they stepped together on to the other kerb. "But you want to have your mind free to find the way home."

"Yair," the reporter cried. They paused, turning, waiting for the others; the reporter glared down with that curious dazed look at Jiggs who carried the boy now with no more apparent effort than he had carried the aeroplane's tail, half-turned also, balanced like a short pair of tailor's shears stuck lightly upright into the table-top, leaning a little forward like a dropped bowie-knife. The other three still walked in the street—the woman who somehow even contrived to wear the skirt beneath the sexless trench-coat as any one of the three men would; the tall parachute jumper with his handsome face now wearing an expression of sullen speculation; and Shumann behind them, in the neat serge suit and the new hat which even yet had the appearance of resting, exactly as the machine had stamped and moulded it, on the hat-block in the store—the three of them with that same air which in Jiggs was merely oblivious and lightly worn insolvency but which in them was that irrevocable homelessness of three immigrants walking down the steerage gang-plank of a ship. As the woman and the parachute jumper stepped on to the kerb, light and bell clanged again and merged into the rising gear-whine as the traffic moved; Shumann sprang forward and on to the kerb with a stiff light movement of unbelievable and rigid celerity, without a hair's abatement of expression or hat-angle. Again, behind them now, the light harried spindrift of tortured confetti and serpentine rose from the gutter in sucking gusts. The reporter

glared at them all now with his dazed, strained and urgent face. "The bastards!" he cried. "The son of a bitches!"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Which way now?" For an instant longer the reporter glared at them. Then he turned, as though put into motion not by any spoken word but by the sheer solid weight of their patient and homeless passivity, into the dark mouth of the street now so narrow of kerb that they followed in single file, walking beneath a shallow overhang of iron-grilled balconies. The street was empty, unlighted save by the reflection from Grandlieu Street behind them, smelling of mud and of something else richly anonymous somewhere between coffee grounds and bananas. Looking back Jiggs tried to spell out the name, the letters inletted into the kerb edge in tile-blurred mosaic, unable to discern at once that it was not only a word, a name which he had neither seen nor heard in his life, but that he was looking at it upside down. "Jesus," he thought, "it must have took a Frenchman to be polite enough to call this a street, let alone name it." Carrying the sleeping boy on his shoulder he was followed in turn by the three others, the four of them hurrying quietly after the hurrying reporter as though Grandlieu Street and its light and movement were Lethe itself just behind them and they four shades this moment out of the living world and being hurried, grave, quiet and unalarmed, on towards complete oblivion by one not only apparently long enough in residence to have become a citizen of the shadows, but one who from all outward appearances had been born there, too. The reporter was still talking, but they did not appear to hear him, as though they had arrived too recently to have yet unclogged their ears of human speech in order to even hear the tongue in which the guide spoke. Now he stopped again, turning upon them again his wild, urgent face. It was another intersection—two narrow roofless tunnels like exposed mine galleries marked by two pale one-way arrows which seemed to have drawn to themselves and to hold in faint suspension what light there was. Then Jiggs saw that to the left the street ran into something of light and life—a line of cars along the kerb beneath an electric sign, a name, against which the shallow dark grill-work of the eternal

62568
O:3M97;31
...RAI UNI...
Dr.TPM.L

balconies hung in weightless and lace-like silhouette. This time Jiggs stepped from the kerb and spelled out the street's name. "Toulouse," he spelled. "Too loose," he thought. "Yair. Swell. Our house last night must have got lost on the way home." So at first he was not listening to the reporter, who now held them immobile in a tableau reminiscent (save for his hat) of the cartoon pictures of city anarchists; Jiggs looked up only to see him rushing away towards the lighted sign. They all looked, watching the thin, long, bat-like shape as it fled on.

"I don't want anything to drink," Shumann said. "I want to go to bed." The parachute jumper put his hand into the pocket of the woman's trench-coat and drew out a pack of cigarettes, the third of those which the reporter had bought before they left the hotel the first time. He lit one and jetted smoke viciously from his nostrils.

"I heard you tell him that," he said.

"Booze?" Jiggs said. "Jesus, is that what he was trying to tell us?" They watched the reporter, the gangling figure in the flapping suit running loosely towards the parked cars. They saw the newsboy emerge from somewhere, the paper already extended and then surrendered, the reporter scarcely pausing to take it and pay.

"That's the second one he has bought to-night since we met him," Shumann said. "I thought he worked on one." The parachute jumper inhaled and jetted the vicious smoke again.

"Maybe he can't read his own writing," he said. The woman moved abruptly; she came to Jiggs and reached for the little boy.

"I'll take him awhile," she said. "You and whatever his name is have carried him all evening." But before Jiggs could even release the boy the parachute jumper came and took hold of the boy, too. The woman looked at him. "Get away, Jack," she said.

"Get away yourself," the jumper said. He lifted the boy from both of them, not gentle and not rough. "I'll take him. I can do this much for my board and keep." He and the woman looked at one another across the sleeping boy.

"Laverne," Shumann said, "give me one of the cigarettes." The woman and the jumper looked at one another.

"What do you want?" she said. "Do you want to walk the streets to-night? Do you want Roger to sit in the railroad station to night and then expect to win a race to-morrow? Do you want Jack to . . ."

"Did I say anything?" the jumper said. "I don't like his face. But all right about that. That's my business. But did I say anything? Did I?"

"Laverne," Shumann said, "give me that cigarette." But it was Jiggs who moved; he went to the jumper and took the child from him.

"Jesus, gimme," he said. "You never have learned how to carry him." From somewhere among the dark, dead, narrow streets there came a sudden burst of sound, of revelry: shrill, turgid, wall-muted, as though emerging from beyond a low doorway or from a cave—some place airless and filled with smoke. Then they saw the reporter. He appeared from beneath the electric sign, emerging from a tile-floored and walled cavern containing nothing, like an incomplete gymnasium shower-room, and lined with two rows of discreet and curtained booths, from one of which a faun-faced waiter with a few stumps of rotting teeth had emerged and recognized him.

"Listen," the reporter had said. "I want a gallon of absinth. You know what kind. I want it for some friends, but I am going to drink it, too, and besides they ain't Mardi Gras tourists. You tell Pete that. You know what I mean?"

"Sure, mike," the waiter said. He turned and went on to the rear and so into a kitchen, where at a zinc-covered table a man in a silk shirt, with a shock of black curls, eating from a single huge dish, looked up at the waiter with a pair of eyes like two topazes while the waiter repeated the reporter's name. "He says he wants it good," the waiter said in Italian. "He has friends with him. I guess I will have to give him gin."

"Absinth?" the other said, also in Italian. "Fix him up. Why not?"

"He said he wanted the good."

"Sure. Fix him up. Call mamma." He went back to eating. The waiter went out a second door; a moment later he returned

with a gallon jug of something without colour and followed by a decent withered old lady in an immaculate apron. The waiter set the jug on the sink and the old lady took from the apron's pocket a small phial. "Look and see if it's the paregoric she has," the man at the table said without looking up or ceasing to chew. The waiter leaned and looked at the phial from which the old lady was pouring into the jug. She poured about an ounce; the waiter shook the jug and held it to the light.

"A trifle more, madonna," he said. "The colour is not quite right." He carried the jug out; the reporter emerged from beneath the sign, carrying it; the four at the corner watched him approach at his loose gallop, as though on the verge not of falling down but of completely disintegrating at the next stride.

"Absinth!" he cried. "New Valois absinth! I told you I knew them. Absinth! We will go home and I will name you some real New Valois drinks and then to hell with them!" He faced them, glaring, with the actual jug now gesticulant. "The bastards!" he cried. "The son of a bitches!"

"Watch out!" Jiggs cried. "Jesus, you nearly hit that post with it!" He shoved the little boy at Shumann. "Here; take him," he said. He sprang forward, reaching for the jug. "Let me carry it," he said.

"Yair; home!" the reporter cried. He and Jiggs both clung to the jug while he glared at them all with his wild bright face. "Hagood didn't know he would have to fire me to make me go there. And get this, listen! I don't work for him now and so he will never know whether I went there or not!"

As the cage door clashed behind him, the editor himself reached down and lifted the face-down watch from the stack of papers, from that cryptic staccato cross-section of an instant crystallized and now dead two hours, though only the moment, the instant: the substance itself not only not dead, not complete, but in its very insoluble enigma of human folly and blundering possessing a futile and tragic immortality:

FARMERS BANKERS STRIKERS ACREAGE
WEATHER POPULATION

Now it was the elevator man who asked the time. "Half-past two," the editor said. He put the watch back, placing it without apparent pause or calculation in the finicking exact centre of the line of caps, so that now, in the shape of a cheap metal disc, the cryptic stripe was parted neatly in the exact centre by the blank backside of the greatest and most inescapable enigma of all. The cage stopped, the door slid back. "Good night," the editor said.

"Good night, Mr. Hagood," the other said. The door closed behind him again. Now in the glass street doors into which the reporter had watched himself walk five hours ago, the editor watched his reflection—a shortish, sedentary man in worn, cheap, near-tweed knickers and rubber-soled golf-shoes, a silk muffler, a shetland jacket which unmistakably represented money and from one pocket of which protruded the collar and tie which he had removed probably on a second or third tee some time during the afternoon, topped by a bare, bald head and the horn glasses—the face of an intelligent betrayed asceticism, the face of a Yale or perhaps a Cornell senior outrageously surprised and overwhelmed by a sudden and vicious double decade—which marched steadily upon him as he crossed the lobby until just at the point where either he or it must give way, when it too flicked and glared away and he descended the two shallow steps and so into the chill and laggard pre-dawn of winter. His roadster stood at the kerb, the ostler from the all-night garage beside it, the neat-gleamed and vaguely obstetrical shapes of golf-heads projecting, raked slightly, above the lowered top and repeating the glint and gleam of other chromium about the car's dull-silver body. The ostler opened the door, but Hagood gestured him in first.

"I've got to go down to French Town," he said. "You drive on to your corner." The ostler slid, lean and fast, past the golf bag and the gears and under the wheel. Hagood entered stiffly, like an old man, letting himself down into the low seat, whereupon without sound or warning the golf-bag struck him across the head and shoulder with an apparently calculated and lurking viciousness, emitting a series of dry clicks as though produced by

the jaws of a beast domesticated though not tamed, half in fun and half in deadly seriousness, like a pet shark. Hagood flung the bag back and then caught it just before it clashed at him again. "Why in hell didn't you put it into the rumble?" he said.

"I'll do it now," the ostler said, opening the door.

"Never mind now," Hagood said. "Let's get on. I have to go clear across town before I can go home."

"Yair, I guess we will all be glad when Moddy Graw is over," the ostler said. The car moved; it accelerated smoothly and on its fading gear-whine it drifted down the alley, poising without actually pausing; then it swung into the Avenue, gaining speed—a machine expensive, complex, delicate and intrinsically useless, created for some obscure psychic need of the species if not the race, from the virgin resources of a continent, to be the individual muscles, bones and flesh of a new and legless kind—into the empty avenue between the purple-and-yellow paper bunting caught from post to post by cryptic shield symbolic of laughter and mirth now vanished and departed. It rushed along the dark lonely street, its displacement and the sum of money it represented concentrated and reduced to a single suavely illuminated dial on which numerals without significance increased steadily towards some yet unrevealed crescendo of ultimate triumph whose only witnesses were waifs. It slowed and stopped as smoothly and skilfully as it had started; the ostler slid out before it came to a halt. "O.K., Mr. Hagood," he said. "Good night."

"Good night," Hagood said. As he slid across to the wheel the golf-bag feinted silently at him. This time he slammed it over and down into the other corner. The car moved again, though now it was a different machine. It got into motion with a savage overpowered lurch as if something of it besides the other and younger man had quitted it when it stopped; it rolled on and into Grandlieu Street, unchallenged now by light or bell. Instead, only the middle eye on each post stared dimly and steadily yellow, the four corners of the intersection marked now by four milk-coloured jets from the fireplugs and standing one

beside each plug, motionless and identical, four men in white like burlesqued internes in comedies, while upon each gutter-plaited stream now drifted the flotsam and jetsam of the dead evening's serpentine and confetti. The car drifted on across the intersection and into that quarter of narrow canyons, the exposed mine-galleries hung with iron lace, going faster now, floored now with cobbles and roofed by the low overcast sky and walled by a thick and tremendous uproar as though all reverberation hung like invisible fog in the narrow streets, to be waked into outrageous and monstrous sound even by stream-lining and air-wheels. He slowed into the kerb at the mouth of an alley in which even as he got out of the car he could see the shape of a lighted second-storey window printing the balcony's shadow upon the flag paving, and then in the window's rectangle the shadow of an arm which even from here he could see holding the shadow of a drinking-glass as, closing the car door, he trod upon the chipped mosaic words, *The Drowned*, set into the kerb and walked up the alley in outrage but not surprise. When he came opposite the window he could see the living arm itself, though long before that he had begun to hear the reporter's voice. Now he could hear nothing else, scarcely his own voice, as he stood beneath the balcony, shouting, beginning to scream, until without warning a short trim-legged man bounced suddenly to the balustrade and leaned outward, blunt of face and with a tonsure like a priest's, as Hagood glared up at him and thought with raging impotence, "He told me they had a horse, too. Damn, damn, damn!"

"Looking for somebody up here, doc?" the man on the balcony said.

"Yes!" Hagood screamed, shouting the reporter's name again.

"Who?" the man on the balcony said, cupping his ear downward. Again Hagood screamed the name. "Nobody up here by that name that I know of," the man on the balcony said; then he said, "Wait a minute." Perhaps it was Hagood's amazed, outraged face; the other turned his head and he too bawled the name into the room behind him. "Anybody here named that?"

he said. The reporter's voice ceased for a second, no more, then it shouted in the same tone which Hagood had been able to hear even from the end of the alley:

"Who wants to know?" But before the man on the balcony could answer, it shouted again: "Tell him he ain't here. Tell him he's moved away. He's married. He's dead." Then the voice roared: "Tell him he's gone to work!" The man on the balcony looked down again.

"Well, mister," he said, "I guess you heard him about as plain as I did."

"No matter," Hagood said. "You come down."

"Me?"

"Yes!" Hagood shouted. "You!" So he stood in the alley and watched the other go back into the room which he himself had never seen. He had never before been closer to what the reporter who had worked directly under him for twenty months now called home than the file form which the reporter had filled out on the day he joined the paper. That room, that apartment which the reporter called bohemian, he had hunted down in this section of New Valois's Vieux Carré and then hunted down piece by piece the furniture which cluttered it, with the eager and deluded absorption of a child hunting coloured easter eggs. It was a gaunt cavern roofed like a barn, with scuffed and worn and even rotted floor-boards and scrofulous walls and cut into two uneven halves, bedroom and studio, by an old theatre curtain and cluttered with slovenly mended and useless tables draped with imitation batik bearing precarious lamps made of liquor bottles, and other objects of oxidized metal made for what original purpose no man knew, and hung with more batik and machine-made Indian blankets and indecipherable bas-relief plaques vaguely religio-Italian primitive. It was filled with objects whose desiccated and fragile inutility bore a kinship to their owner's own physical being as though he and they were all conceived in one womb and spawned in one litter—objects which possessed that quality of veteran prostitutes, of being overlaid by the ghosts of so many anonymous proprietors that even the present title-holder held merely rights but no actual

possession—a room apparently exhumed from a theatrical morgue and rented intact from one month to the next.

It was about two months after the reporter had joined the paper without credentials or any past, documentary or hearsay, at all, with his appearance of some creature evolved by forced draught in a laboratory and both beyond and incapable of any need for artificial sustenance, like a tumble weed, with his eager, dog-like air and his child's aptitude for being not so much where news happened exactly but for being wherever were the most people at any given time rushing about the Vieux Carré for his apartment and his furniture and the decorations—the blankets and batik and the objects which he would buy and fetch into the office and then listen with incorrigible shocked amazement while Hagood would prove to him patiently how he had paid two or three prices for them.—One day, Hagood looked up and watched a woman whom he had never seen before enter the city room. "She looked like a locomotive," he told the paper's owner later with bitter outrage. "You know: when the board has been devilled and harried by the news reels of Diësel trains and by the reporters that ask them about the future of railroading until at last the board takes the old engine, the one that set the record back in nineteen-two or nineteen-ten or somewhere and send it to the shops and one day they unveil it (with the news reels and the reporters all there, too) with horseshoe rose wreaths and congress men and thirty-six high-school girls out of the beauty show in bathing-suits, and it is a new engine on the outside only, because everyone is glad and proud that inside it is still the old fast one of nineteen-two or -ten. The same number is on the tender and the old fine, sound, time-proved working parts, only the cab and the boiler are painted robin's egg blue and the rods and the bell look more like gold than gold does and even the supercharger don't look so very noticeable except in a hard light, and the number is in neon now: the first number in the world to be in neon?"

He looked up from his desk and saw her enter on a blast of scent as arresting as mustard gas and followed by the reporter looking more than ever like a shadow whose projector had

eluded it weeks and weeks ago . . . the fine big bosom like one of the walled, impervious towns of the Middle Ages whose origin antedates writing, which have been taken and retaken in uncountable fierce assaults which overran them in the brief fury of a moment and vanished, leaving no trace, the broad tomato-coloured mouth, the eyes pleasant, shrewd and beyond mere disillusion, the hair of that diamond-hard and imperviously recent lustre of a gilt service in a shop window, the gold-studded teeth square and white and big like those of a horse. He saw all this beneath a plump, rich billowing of pink plumes so that he thought of himself as looking at a canvas out of the vernal equinox of pigment when they could not always write to sign their names to them—a canvas conceived in and executed out of that fine innocence of sleep and open bowels capable of crowning the rich, foul, unchaste earth with rose cloud where lurk and sport oblivious and incongruous cherubim. "I just dropped into town to see who he really works for," she said.

"May I . . . Thanks." She took the cigarette from the pack on the desk before he could move, though she did wait for him to strike and hold the match. "And to ask you to sort of look out for him. Because he is a fool, you see. I don't know whether he is a newspaper man or not. Maybe you don't know yet, yourself. But he is the baby." Then she was gone—the scent, the plumes; the room which had been full of pink vapour and golden teeth darkened again, became niggard—and Hagood thought, "Baby of what?" because the reporter had told him before and now assured him again that he had neither brothers nor sisters, that he had no ties at all save the woman who had passed through the city room—and apparently through New Valois, too, without stopping, with something of that aura of dwarfed distances and self-sufficient bulk of a light cruiser passing through a canal lock—and the incredible name.

"Only the name is right," the reporter told him. "Folks don't always believe it at first, but it's correct as far as I know."

"But I thought she said her name was——" and Hagood repeated the name the woman had given.

"Yair," the reporter said. "It is now."

"You mean she has——" Hagood said.

"Yair," the reporter said. "She's changed it twice since I can remember. They were both good guys, too." So then Hagood believed that he saw the picture—the woman not voracious, not rapacious; just omnivorous like the locomotive's maw of his late symbology; he told himself with savage disillusion, Yes. Come here to see just who he really worked for. What she meant was she came here to see that he really had a job and whether or not he was going to keep it. He believed now that he knew why the reporter cashed his pay-cheque before leaving the building each Saturday night; he could almost see the reporter, running now to reach the post office station before it closed—or perhaps the telegraph office—in the one case the flimsy blue strip of money order, in the other the yellow duplicate receipt. So that, on that first midweek night when the reporter opened the subject diffidently, Hagood set a precedent out of his own pocket which he did not break for almost a year, cursing the big woman whom he had seen but once, who had passed across the horizon of his life without stopping, yet for ever after disarranging it, like the air-blast of the oblivious locomotive crossing a remote and trash-filled suburban street. But he said nothing until the reporter came and requested a loan twice the size of an entire week's pay, and even then he did not open the matter. It was his face which caused the reporter to explain; it was for a wedding present. "A wedding present?" Hagood said.

"Yair," the reporter said. "She's been good to me. I reckon I better send her something, even if she won't need it."

"Won't need it?" Hagood cried.

"No. She won't need what I could send her. She's always been lucky that way."

"Wait," Hagood said. "Let me get this straight. You want to buy a wedding present. I thought you told me you didn't have any sisters or br——"

"No," the reporter said. "It's for mamma."

"Oh," Hagood said after a time, though perhaps it did not seem very long to the reporter; perhaps it did not seem long

before Hagood spoke again: "I see. Yes. Am I to congratulate you?"

"Thanks," the reporter said. "I don't know the guy. But the two I did know were O.K."

"I see," Hagood said. "Yes. Well. Married. The two you did know. Was one of them your—— But no matter. Don't tell me. Don't tell me!" he cried. "At least it is something. Anyway, she did what she could for you!" Now it was the reporter looking at Hagood with courteous interrogation. "It will change your life some now," Hagood said.

"Well, I hope not," the reporter said. "I don't reckon she has done any worse this time than she used to. You saw yourself she's still a fine-looking old gal and a good goer still, even if she ain't any longer one of the ones you will find in the dance marathons at 6 a.m. So I guess it's O.K. still. She always has been lucky that way."

"You hope——" Hagood said. "You . . . Wait," he said. He took a cigarette from the pack on the desk, though at last the reporter himself leaned and struck the match for him and held it. "Let me get this straight. You mean you haven't been—that that money you borrowed from me, that you send——"

"Send what where?" the reporter said after a moment. "Oh, I see. No. I ain't sent her money. She sends me money. And I don't reckon that just getting married again will . . ." Hagood did not even sit back in the chair.

"Get out of here!" he screamed. "Get out! Out!"

For a moment longer the reporter looked down at him with that startled interrogation, then he turned and retreated. But before he had cleared the railing around the desk Hagood was calling him back in a voice hoarse and restrained. He returned to the desk and watched the editor snatch from a drawer a pad of note forms and scrawl on the top one and thrust pad and pen towards him.

"What's this, chief?" the reporter said.

"It's a hundred and eighty dollars," Hagood said in that tense careful voice, as though speaking to a child. "With interest

at six per cent. per annum and payable at sight. Not even on demand: on sight. Sign it."

"Jesus," the reporter said. "Is it that much already?"

"Sign it," Hagood said.

"Sure, chief," the reporter said. "I never did mean to try to beat you out of it."

But that was eighteen months ago; now Hagood and Jiggs stood side by side on the old uneven flags which the New Valoisians claim rang more than once to the feet of the pirate Lafitte, looking up towards the window and the loud drunken voice beyond it.

"So that's his name," Jiggs said. "That what?"

"That nothing!" Hagood said. "It's his last name. Or the only name he has except the one initial as far as I or anyone else in this town knows. But it must be his; I never heard anyone else named that and so no one intelligent enough to have anything to hide from would deliberately assume it. You see? Anyone, even a child, would know it is false."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Even a kid wouldn't be fooled by it." They looked up at the window.

"I know his mother," Hagood said. "Oh, I know what you are thinking. I thought the same thing myself when I first saw him: what anyone would think if he were to begin to explain where and when and why he came into the world, like what you think about a bug or a worm: 'All right! All right! For God's sake, all right!' And now he has doubtless been trying ever since, I think it was about half-past twelve, to get drunk and I daresay successfully."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "You're safe there. He's telling Jack how to fly, about how Matt Ord gave him an hour's dual once. About how when you take off and land on them concrete Fs out at the airport he says it's like flying in and out of a—organization maybe. He said organization or organism but maybe he never knew himself what he was trying to say; something about a couple of gnats hanging around a couple of married elephants in bed together like they say it takes them days and days and even weeks to get finished. Yair, him and Jack both, because Laverne

and Roger have gone to bed in the bed with the kid and so maybe him and Jack are trying to get boiled enough to sleep on the floor, because Jesus, he spent enough on that taxi to have taken us all to the hotel. But nothing would do but we must come home with him. Yair, he called it a house too; and on the way he rushes into this dive and rushes out with a gallon of something that he is hollering is absinth only I never drank any absinth but I could have made him all he wanted of it with a bath tub and enough grain alcohol and a bottle of paregoric or maybe it's laudanum. But you can come up and try it yourself. Besides, I better get on back; I am kind of keeping an eye on him and Jack, see?"

"Watching them?" Hagood said.

"Yair. It won't be no fight though; like I told Jack, it would be like pushing over your grandmother. It happened that Jack kept on seeing him and Laverne this afternoon standing around on the apron or coming out of the——" Hagood turned upon Jiggs.

"Do I," Hagood cried with thin outrage, "do I have to spend half my life listening to him telling me about you people and the other half listening to you telling me about him?" Jiggs' mouth was still open. He closed it slowly; he looked at Hagood steadily with his hot bright regard, his hand on his hips, light poised on his bronco legs, leaning a little forward.

"You don't have to listen to anything I can tell you if you don't want to, mister," he said. "You called me down here. I never called you. What is it you want with me or him?"

"Nothing!" Hagood said. "I only came here in the faint hope that he would be in bed, or at least sober enough to come to work to-morrow."

"He says he don't work for you. He says you fired him."

"He lied!" Hagood cried. "I told him to be there at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. That's what I told him."

"Is that what you want me to tell him, then?"

"Yes! Not to-night. Don't try to tell him to-night. Wait until to-morrow, when he . . . You can do that much for your

night's lodging, can't you?" Again Jiggs looked at him with that hot steady speculation.

"Yair. I'll tell him. But it won't be just because I am trying to pay him back for what he done for us to-night. See what I mean?"

"I apologize," Hagood said. "But tell him. Do it any way you want to, but just tell him, see that he is told before he leaves to-morrow. Will you?"

"O.K.," Jiggs said. He watched the other turn and go back down the alley, then he turned too and entered the house, the corridor, and mounted the cramped, dark, treacherous stairs and into the drunken voice again. The parachute jumper sat on an iron cot disguised thinly by another Indian blanket and piled with bright faded pillows about which dust seemed to lurk in a thin nimbus cloud even at the end of the couch which the jumper had not disturbed. The reporter stood beside a slopped table on which the gallon jug sat and a dish-pan containing now mostly dirty ice-water, though a few fragments of the actual ice still floated in it. He was in his shirt sleeves, his collar open and the knot of his tie slipped downward and the ends of the tie darkly wet, as if he had leaned them downward into the dish-pan; against the bright, vivid even though machine-dyed blanket on the wall behind him he resembled some slain curious trophy of a western vacation, half finished by a taxidermist and then forgotten and then salvaged again.

"Who was it?" he said. "Did he look like if you wanted to see him right after supper on Friday night you would have to go around to the church annex where the Boy Scouts are tripping one another up from behind?"

"What?" Jiggs said. "I guess so." Then he said, "Yair. That's him." The reporter looked at him, holding in his hand a glass such as chain-store jam comes in.

"Did you tell him I was married? Did you tell him I got two husbands now?"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "How about going to bed?"

"Bed?" the reporter cried. "Bed? When I got a widowed guest in the house and the least thing I can do for him is to get

drunk with him because I can't do anything else because I am in the same fix he is only I am in this fix all the time and not just to-night?"

"Sure," Jiggs said. "Let's go to bed." The reporter leaned against the table and with his bright reckless face he watched Jiggs go to the bags in the corner and take from the stained canvas sack a paper-wrapped parcel and open it and take out a brand-new bootjack; he watched Jiggs sit on one of the chairs and try to remove the right boot; then at the sound he turned and looked with that bright speculation at the parachute jumper completely relaxed on the cot, his long legs crossed and extended, laughing at Jiggs with vicious and humourless steadiness. Jiggs sat on the floor and extended his leg towards the reporter. "Give it a yank," he said.

"Sure," the jumper said. "We'll give it a yank for you." The reporter had already taken hold of the boot; the jumper struck him aside with a back-handed blow. The reporter staggered back into the wall and watched the jumper, his handsome face tense and savage in the lamplight, his teeth showing beneath the slender moustache, take hold of the boot and then lift his foot suddenly towards Jiggs' groin before Jiggs could move. The reporter half fell into the jumper, jolting him away so that the jumper's foot only struck Jiggs' turned flank.

"Here!" he cried. "You ain't playing!"

"Playing?" the jumper said. "Sure I'm playing. That's all I do—like this." The reporter did not see Jiggs rise from the floor at all; he just saw Jiggs in mid-bounce, as though he had risen with no recourse to his legs at all, and Jiggs' and the jumper's hands flick and lock as with the other hand Jiggs now hurled the reporter back into the wall.

"Quit it, now," Jiggs said. "Look at him. What's the fun in that, huh?" He looked back over his shoulder at the reporter. "Go to bed," he said. "Go on, now. You got to be at work at ten o'clock. Go on." The reporter did not move. He leaned back against the wall, his face fixed in a thin grimace of smiling as though glazed. Jiggs sat on the floor again, his right leg extended again, holding it extended between his hands. "Come on," he

said. "Give them a yank." The reporter took hold of the boot and pulled; abruptly he too was sitting on the floor facing Jiggs, listening to himself laughing. "Hush," Jiggs said. "Do you want to wake up Roger and Laverne and the kid? Hush now. Hush."

"Yair," the reporter whispered. "I'm trying to quit. But I can't. See? Just listen to me."

"Sure you can quit," Jiggs said. "Look. You done already quit. Ain't you? See now?"

"Yair," the reporter said. "But maybe it's just free-wheeling." He began to laugh again, and then Jiggs was leaning forward, slapping his thigh with the flat of the bootjack until he stopped.

"Now," Jiggs said. "Pull." The boot loosened, since it had already been worked at; Jiggs slipped it off. But when the left one came it gave way so suddenly that the reporter went over on his back, though this time he did not laugh; he lay there saying,

"It's O.K. I ain't going to laugh." Then he was looking up at Jiggs standing over him in a pair of cotton socks which, like the home-made putties of the morning, consisted of legs and insteps only.

"Get up," Jiggs said, lifting the reporter.

"All right," the reporter said. "Just make the room stop." He began to struggle to stay down, but Jiggs hauled him up and he leaned outward against the arms which held him on his feet, towards the couch, the cot. "Wait till it comes around again," he cried; then he lunged violently, sprawling on to the cot and then he could feel someone tumbling on to the cot and he struggled again to be free, saying thickly through a sudden, hot, violent, liquid mass in his mouth, "Look out! Look out! I'm on now. Let go!" Then he was free, though he could not move yet. Then he saw Jiggs lying on the floor next the wall, his back to the room and his head pillowed on the canvas sack, and the parachute jumper at the slopped table, pouring from the jug. The reporter got up, unsteadily, though he spoke quite distinctly: "Yair. That's the old idea. Little drink, hey?" He moved towards the table, walking carefully, his face wearing

again the expression of bright and desperate recklessness, speaking apparently in soliloquy to an empty room: "But nobody to drink with now. Jiggs gone to bed and Roger gone to bed and Laverne can't drink to-night because Roger won't let her drink. See?" Now he looked at the jumper across the table, above the jug, the jam glasses, the dish-pan, with that bright dissolute desperation though he still seemed to speak into an empty room: "Yair. It was Roger, see. Roger was the one that wouldn't let her have anything to drink to-night, that took the glass out of her hand after a friend gave it to her. And so she and Roger have gone to bed. See?" They looked at one another.

"Maybe you wanted to go to bed with her yourself?" the jumper said. For a moment longer they looked at one another. The reporter's face had changed. The bright recklessness was still there, but now it was overlaid with that abject desperation which, lacking anything better, is courage.

"Yes!" he cried. "Yes!" flinging himself backward and crossing his arms before his face at the same time. At first he did not even realize that it was only the floor which had struck him until he lay prone again, his arms above his face and head and looking between them at the feet of the parachute jumper who had not moved. He watched the jumper's hand go out and strike the lamp from the table and then when the crash died he could see nothing and hear nothing, lying on the floor perfectly and completely passive and waiting. "Jesus," he said quietly, "for a minute I thought you were trying to knock the jug off." But there was no reply, and again his insides had set up that fierce maelstrom to which there was no focal point, not even himself. He lay motionless and waiting and felt the quick faint airblast and then the foot, the shoe, striking him hard in the side, once, and then he heard the jumper's voice from above him speaking apparently from somewhere within the thick instability of the room, the darkness, whirling and whirling away, in a tone of quiet detachment saying the same words and in the same tone in which he had spoken them to Jiggs in the brothel six hours ago. They seemed to continue, to keep on speaking, clapping quietly down at him even after he knew by sound that the

jumper had gone to the cot and stretched out on it; he could hear the quiet savage movements as the other arranged the dusty pillows and drew the blanket up.

"That must be at least twelve times," the reporter thought. "He must have called me a son of a bitch at least eight times after he went to sleep. . . . Yair," he thought, "I told you. I'll go, all right. But you will have to give me time, until I can get up and move. . . . Yair," he thought, while the long vertiginous darkness completed a swirl more profound than any yet; now he felt the thick cold oil start and spring from his pores which, when his dead hand found his dead face, did not sop up nor wipe away beneath the hand but merely doubled as though each drop were the atom which instantaneously divides not only into two equal parts but into two parts each of which is equal to the recent whole; "yesterday I talked myself out of a job, but to-night I seem to have talked myself out of my own house."

But at last he began to see: it was the dim shape of the window abruptly against some outer light-coloured space or air; vision caught, snagged and clung desperately and blindly like the pinafore of a child falling from a fence or a tree. On his hands and knees and still holding to the window by vision he found the table and got to his feet. He remembered exactly where he had put the key, carefully beneath the edge of the lamp, but now with the lamp gone his still nerveless hand did not feel the key at all when he knocked it from the table; it was hearing alone: the forlorn faint clink. He got down and found it at last and rose again, carefully, and wiped the key on the end of his necktie and laid it in the centre of the table, putting it down with infinite care as though it were a dynamite cap, and found one of the sticky glasses and poured from the jug by sound and feel and raised the glass, gulping, while the icy almost pure alcohol channelled fiercely down his chin and seemed to blaze through his cold wet shirt and on to and into his flesh. It tried to come back at once; he groped to the stairs and down them, swallowing and swallowing the vomit which tried to fill his throat.

There was something else that he had intended to do which he remembered only when the door clicked irrevocably behind

him and the cold thick pre-dawn breathed against his damp shirt which had no coat to cover it and warm it. And now he could not recall at once what he had intended to do, where he had intended to go, as though destination and purpose were some theoretical point like latitude or time which he had passed in the hall, or something like a stamped and forgotten letter in the coat which he had failed to bring. Then he remembered; he stood on the cold flags, shaking with slow and helpless violence inside his wet shirt, remembering that he had started for the newspaper to spend the rest of the night on the floor of the now empty city room (he had done it before), having for the time forgotten that he was now fired. If he had been sober he would have tried the door, as people will, out of that vague hope for, even though not belief in, miracles. But, drunk, he did not. He just began to move carefully away, steadying himself along the wall until he should get into motion, waiting to begin again to try to keep the vomit swallowed, thinking quietly out of peaceful and profound and detached desolation and amazement: "Four hours ago they were out and I was in, and now it's turned around exactly backward. It's like there was a kind of cosmic rule for poverty like there is for water-level, like there has to be a certain weight of bums on park benches or in railroad waiting-rooms waiting for morning to come or the world will tilt up and spill all of us wild and shrieking and grabbing like so many shooting stars, off into nothing." But it would have to be a station, walls, even though he had long since surrendered to the shaking and felt no cold at all any more. There were two stations, but he had never walked to either of them and he could not decide nor remember which was the nearer, when he stopped abruptly, remembering the Market, thinking of coffee. "Coffee," he said. "Coffee. When I have had some coffee, it will be to-morrow. Yair. When you have had coffee, then it is already to-morrow and so you don't have to wait for it."

He walked pretty fast now, breathing with his mouth wide open as if he hoped (or were actually doing it) to soothe and quiet his stomach with the damp and dark and the cold.

Now he could see the Market—a broad, low, brilliant, wall-less cavern filled with ranked vegetables as bright and impervious in appearance as artificial flowers, among which men in sweaters and women in men's sweaters and hats too sometimes, with Latin faces still swollen with sleep and vapoured faintly about the mouth and nostrils by breathing still warm from slumber, paused and looked at the man in shirt sleeves and loosened collar, with a face looking more than ever like that of a corpse roused and outraged out of what should have been the irrevocable and final sleep. He went on towards the coffee-stall; he felt fine now. "Yair, I'm all right now," he thought, because almost at once he had quit trembling and shaking, and when at last the cup of hot pale liquid was set before him he told himself again that he felt fine; indeed, the very fact of his insistence to himself should have been intimation enough that things were not all right. And then he sat perfectly motionless, looking down at the cup in that rapt concern with which one listens to his own insides. "Jesus," he thought. "Maybe I tried it too quick. Maybe I should have walked around a while longer." But he was here, the coffee waited before him; already the counterman was watching him coldly. "And Jesus, I'm right; after a man has had his coffee it's to-morrow: it has to be!" he cried, with no sound, with that cunning, self-deluding logic of a child. "And to-morrow it's just a hang over; you ain't still drunk to-morrow; to-morrow you can't feel this bad."

So he raised the cup as he had the final glass before he left home; he felt the hot liquid channelling down his chin too and striking through his shirt against his flesh. With his throat surging and trying to gag and his gaze holding desperately to the low cornice above the coffee-urn he thought of the cup exploding from his mouth, shooting upward and without trajectory like a champagne cork. He put the cup down, already moving, though not quite running, out of the stall and between the bright tables, passing from one to another by his hands like a monkey runs until he brought up against a table of strawberry boxes, holding to it without knowing why he had stopped nor when, while a woman in a black shawl behind the table repeated:

"How many, mister?" After awhile he heard his mouth saying something, trying to.

"Qu'est-ce qu'il voulait?" a man's voice said from the end of the table.

"D' journal d' matin," the woman said.

"Donne-t-il," the man said. The woman stopped and reappeared with a paper, folded back upon an inner sheet, and handed it to the reporter.

"Yair," he said. "That's it." But when he tried to take it he missed it; it floated down between his and the woman's hands, opening on to the first page. She folded it right now and he took it, swaying, holding to the table with the other hand, reading from the page in a loud declamatory voice: "Bankers strike! Farmers yacht! Quintuplets acreage! Reduction gains!—No; wait." He swayed, staring at the shawled woman with gaunt concentration. He fumbled in his pocket; the coins rang on the floor with the same sound which the key made, but now as he began to stoop the cold floor struck him a shocking blow on the face and then hands were holding him again while he struggled to rise. Now he was plunging toward the entrance; he caromed from the last table without even feeling it, the hot corrupted coffee gathering inside him like a big heavy bird beginning to fly as he plunged out the door and struck a lamp-post and clinging to it surrendered, as life, sense, all, seemed to burst out of his mouth as though his entire body were trying in one fierce orgasm to turn itself wrong side out.

Now it was dawn. It had come unremarked; he merely realized suddenly that he could now discern faintly the words on the paper and that he now stood in a grey palpable substance without weight or light, leaning against the wall which he had not yet tried to leave. "Because I don't know whether I can make it yet or not," he thought, with peaceful and curious interest as if he were engaged in a polite parlour game for no stakes. When he did move at last he seemed to blow leaf light along the greying wall to which he did not exactly cling but rather moved in some form of light slow attrition, like the leaf without quite enough wind to keep it in motion. The light grew

steadily, without seeming to come from any one source or direction; now he could read the words, the print, quite well, though they still had a tendency to shift and flow in smooth elusion of sense, meaning while he read them aloud: "Quintuplets bank . . . No; there ain't any pylon. . . . Wait. Wait. . . . Yair, it was a pylon only it was pointed down and buried at the time and they were not quintuplets yet when they banked around it. . . . Farmers bank. Yair. Farmer's boy, two farmers' boys, at least one from Ohio anyway she told me. And the ground they plough from Iowa; yair, two farmers' boys down banked; yair, two buried pylons in the one Iowa drowsing woman drowsing pylon drowsing. . . . No; wait." He had reached the alley now and he would have to cross it since his doorway was in the opposite wall: so that now the paper was in the hand on the side which now clung creeping to the wall and he held the page up into the grey dawn as though for one last effort, concentrating sight, the vision without mind or thought, on the symmetrical line of box heads:

FARMERS REFUSE BANKERS DENY STRIKERS DEMAND PRESIDENT'S YACHT ACREAGE REDUCTION QUINTUPLETS GAIN
EX-SENATOR RENAUD CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY AS RESTAURATEUR

. . . the fragile web of ink and paper, assertive, proclamative; profound and irrevocable if only in the sense of being profoundly and irrevocably unimportant . . . the dead instant's fruit of forty tons of machinery and an entire nation's antic delusion. The eye, the organ without thought, speculation, or amaze, ran off the last word and then, ceasing again, vision went on ahead and gained the door beneath the balcony and clung and completely ceased. "Yair," the reporter thought. "I'm almost there but still I don't know if I am going to make it or not."

To-Morrow

It was a foot in his back prodding him that waked Jiggs. He rolled over to face the room and the daylight and saw Shumann standing over him, dressed save for his shirt, and the parachute jumper awake too, lying on his side on the couch with the Indian blanket drawn to his chin and across his feet the rug which last night had been on the floor beside the cot. "It's half-past eight," Shumann said. "Where's what's his name?"

"Where's who?" Jiggs said. Then he sat up, bounced up into sitting, his feet in the sock legs projecting before him as he looked about the room in surprised recollection. "Jesus, where is he?" he said. "I left him and Jack . . . Jesus, his boss came down here about three o'clock and said for him to be somewhere at work at ten o'clock." He looked at the parachute jumper, who might have been asleep save for his open eyes. "What became of him?" he said.

"How should I know?" the jumper said. "I left him lying there on the floor, about where you are standing," he said to Shumann. Shumann looked at the jumper too.

"Were you picking on him again?" he said.

"Yair, he was," Jiggs said. "So that's what you were staying awake until I went to sleep for." The jumper did not answer. They watched him throw the blanket and the rug back and rise, dressed as he had been the night before—coat, vest and tie—save for his shoes; they watched him put the shoes on and stand erect again and contemplate his now wrinkled trousers in bleak and savage immobility for a moment, then turn towards the faded theatre curtain.

"Going to wash," he said. Shumann watched Jiggs, seated now, delve into the canvas sack and take out the tennis shoes and the boot legs which he had worn yesterday and put his feet

into the shoes. The new boots sat neatly, just the least bit wrinkled about the ankles, against the wall where Jiggs' head had been. Shumann looked at the boots and then at the worn tennis shoes which Jiggs was lacing, but he said nothing: he just said:

"What happened last night? Did Jack——"

"Nah," Jiggs said. "They were all right. Just drinking. Now and then Jack would try to ride him a little, but I told him to let him alone. And Jesus, his boss said for him to be at work at ten o'clock. Have you looked downstairs? Did you look under the bed in there? Maybe he——"

"Yair," Shumann said. "He ain't here." He watched Jiggs now forcing the tennis shoes slowly and terrifically through the boot legs, grunting and cursing. "How do you expect them to go on over the shoes?"

"How in hell would I get the strap on the outside of the shoes if I didn't?" Jiggs said. "You ought to know what become of him; you wasn't drunk last night, were you? I told his boss I would——"

"Yair," Shumann said. "Go back and wash." With his legs drawn under him to rise Jiggs paused and glanced at his hands for an instant.

"I washed good at the hotel last night," he said. He began to rise, then he stopped and took from the floor a half-smoked cigarette and bounced up, already reaching into his shirt pocket as he came up facing the table. With the stub in his mouth and the match in his hand, he paused. On the table, amid the stained litter of glasses and matches burnt and not burnt and ashes which surrounded the jug and the dish-pan, lay a pack of cigarettes, another of those which the reporter had bought last night. Jiggs put the stub in his shirt pocket and reached for the pack. "Jesus," he said, "during the last couple months I have got to where a whole cigarette ain't got any kick to it." Then his hand paused again, but for less than a watch-tick, and Shumann watched it go on to the jug's neck while the other hand broke free from the table's sticky top the glass from which the reporter had drunk in the darkness.

"Leave that stuff alone," Shumann said. He looked at the blunt watch on his naked wrist. "It's twenty to nine. Let's get out of here."

"Yair," Jiggs said, pouring into the glass. "Get your clothes on; let's go check them valves. Jesus, I told the guy's boss I would. . . . Say, I found out last night what his name is. Jesus, you wouldn't never guess in——" He stopped; he and Shumann looked at one another.

"Off again, huh?" Shumannn said.

"I'm going to take one drink, that I saved out from last night to take this morning. Didn't you just say let's get out to the field? How in hell am I going to get anything to drink out there, even if I wanted it, when for Christ's sake the only money I have had in three months I was accused of stealing? When the only guy that's offered me a drink in three months we took both his beds away from him and left him the floor to sleep on and now we never even kept up with him enough to deliver a message from his boss where he is to go to work——"

"One drink, huh?" Shumann said. "There's a slop jar back there; why not get it and empty the jug into it and take a good bath?" He turned away. Jiggs watched him lift the curtain aside and pass beyond it. Then Jiggs began to raise the glass, making already the preliminary grimace and shudder, when he paused again. This time it was the key, where the reporter had carefully placed it and beside which Shumann had set the broken lamp which he had raised from the floor. Touching the key, Jiggs found it, too, vulcanized lightly to the table's top by spilt liquor.

"He must be here, then," he said. "But for Christ's sake where?" He looked about the room again; suddenly he went to the couch and lifted the tumbled blanket and looked under the cot. "He must be somewheres though," he thought. "Maybe behind the baseboard. Jesus, he wouldn't make no more bulge behind it than a snake would." He went back to the table and raised the glass again; this time it was the woman and the little boy. She was dressed, the trench-coat belted; she gave the room a single pale comprehensive glance, then she looked at him, brief, instantaneous, blank. "Drinking a little breakfast," he said.

"You mean supper," she said. "You'll be asleep in two hours."

"Did Roger tell you we have mislaid the guy?" he said.

"Go on and drink it," she said. "It's almost nine o'clock. We have got to pull all those valves to-day." But again he did not get the glass to his mouth. Shumann was also dressed now. Across the arrested glass Jiggs watched the jumper go to the bags and jerk them and then the boots out into the floor and then turn upon Jiggs, snarling:

"Go on. Drink it."

"Don't either of them know where he went?" the woman said.

"I don't know," Shumann said. "They say they don't."

"I told you No," the jumper said. "I didn't do anything to him. He flopped down there on the floor and I put the light out and went to bed and Roger woke me up and he was gone and it's damned high time we were doing the same thing if we are going to get those valves miked and back in the engine before three o'clock."

"Yair," Shumann said, "he can find us if he wants us. We are easier for him to find than he is for us to find." He took one of the bags; the jumper already had the other. "Go on," he said, without looking at Jiggs. "Drink it and come on."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Let's get started." He drank now and set the glass down while the others moved towards the stairs and began to descend. Then he looked at his hands; he looked at them as if he had just discovered he had them and had not yet puzzled out what they were for. "Jesus, I had better wash," he said. "You all go ahead; I'll catch you before you get to the bus stop."

"Sure; to-morrow," the jumper said. "Take the jug too. No; leave it. If he's going to lay around drunk all day long too, better here than out there in the way." He was last; he kicked the boots savagely out of his path. "What are you going to do with these—carry them in your hands?"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Until I get them paid for."

"Paid for? I thought you did that yesterday, with my——"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "So I did."

"Come on, come on," Shumann said from the stairs. "Go on, Laverne." The jumper went on to the stairs, Shumann now herded them all before him. Then he paused and looked back at Jiggs, dressed, neat, profoundly serious beneath the new hat which Jiggs might still have been looking at through plate glass. "Listen," he said. "Are you starting out on a bat to-day? I ain't trying to stop you because I know I can't, I have tried that before. I just want you to tell me so I can get somebody else to help Jack and me pull those valves."

"Don't you worry about me," Jiggs said. "Jesus, don't I know we are in a jam as well as you do? You all go on; I'll wash up and catch you before you get to Main Street." They went on; Shumann's hat sank from sight. Then Jiggs moved with rubber-soled and light celerity. He caught up the boots and passed on beyond the curtain and into a cramped alcove hung with still more blankets and pieces of frayed and faded dyed or painted cloth enigmatic of significance and inscrutable of purpose, and containing a chair, a table, a washstand, a chest of drawers bearing a celluloid comb and two ties such as might be salvaged from a trashbin but for the fact that anyone who would have salvaged them would not wear ties, and a bed neatly made up, so neatly restored that it shouted the fact that it had been recently occupied by a woman who did not live there. Jiggs went to the washstand but it was not his hands and face that he bathed. It was the boots, examining with grim concern a long scratch across the instep of the right one where he believed that he could even discern the reversed trademark of the assaulting heel-tap, scrubbing at the mark with the damp towel. "Maybe it won't show through a shine," he thought. "Anyway I can be glad the bastard wasn't a football player." It did not improve any now, however, so he wiped both the boots, upper and sole, and hung the now filthy towel carefully and neatly back and returned to the other room. He may have looked at the jug in passing, but first he put the boots carefully into the canvas sack before going to the table.

He could have heard sounds, even voices, from the alley beneath the window if he had been listening. But he was not.

All he heard now was that thunderous silence and solitude in which man's spirit crosses the eternal repetitive rubicon of his vice in the instant after the terror and before the triumph becomes dismay—the moral and spiritual waif shrieking his feeble I-am-I into the desert of chance and disaster. He raised the jug; his hot bright eyes watched the sticky glass run almost half full; he gulped it, raw, scooping blindly the stale and trash-laden water from the dish-pan and gulping that too; for one fierce and immolated instant he thought about hunting and finding a bottle which he could fill and carry with him in the bag along with the boots, the soiled shirt, the sweater, the cigar box containing a cake of laundry soap and a cheap straight razor and a pair of pliers and a spool of safety wire, but he did not. "Be damned if I will," he cried silently, even while his now ruthless inside was telling him that within the hour he would regret it; "be damned if I will steal any man's whiskey behind his back," he cried, catching up the sack and hurrying down the stairs, fleeing at least from temptation's protagonist, even if it was rather that virtue which is desire's temporary assuagement than permanent annealment, since he did not want the drink right now and so when he did begin to want it, he would be at least fifteen miles away from the particular jug. It was not the present need for another drink that he was running from. "I ain't running from that," he told himself, hurrying down the corridor towards the street door.

"It's because even if I am a bum there is some muck I will not eat," he cried out of the still white glare of honour and even pride, jerking the door open and then leaping up and outward as the reporter, the last night's missing host, tumbled slowly into the corridor at Jigg's feet as he had at the feet of the others when the parachute jumper opened the door five minutes before. Shumann had dragged the reporter up and the door of its own weight swung to behind them; the reporter half lay again in the frame of it, his nondescript hair broken down about his brow and his eyes closed and peaceful, his shirt and awry tie stiff and sour with vomit. When Jiggs in turn jerked open the door once more the reporter tumbled slowly sideways into the

corridor as Shumann caught him and Jiggs hurdled them both as the door swung to with its own weight and locked itself.

Whereupon something curious and unpresaged happened to Jiggs. It was not that his purpose had flagged or intention and resolution had reversed, switched back on him. It was as though the entire stable world across which he hurried from temptation, victorious and in good faith and unwarned, had reversed ends while he was in mid-air above the two men in the doorway; as though his own body had become corrupt too and without consulting him at all had made that catlike turn in mid-air and presented to him the blank and now irrevocable panel upon which like on the screen he saw the jug sitting on the table in the empty room above plain enough to have touched it. "Catch that door!" he cried; he seemed to bounce back to it before even touching the flags, scrabbling at its blank surface with his hands. "Why didn't somebody catch it?" he cried. "Why in hell didn't you holler?" But they were not even looking at him; now the parachute jumper stooped with Shumann over the reporter. "What?" Jiggs said. "Breakfast, huh?" They did not even look at him.

"Go on," the jumper said. "See what he's got or get away and let me do it."

"Wait," Jiggs said. "Let's find some way to get him back into the house first." He leaned across them and tried the door again. He could even see the key now, still on the table beside the jug—an object trivial in size, that a man could almost swallow without it hurting him much probably and which now, even more than the jug, symbolized taunting and fierce regret since it postulated frustration not in miles but in inches; the gambit itself had refused, confounding him and leaving him hung up on a son of a bitch who couldn't even get into his own house.

"Come on," the jumper said to Shumann. "See what he's got—unless somebody has already beat us to him."

"Yair," Jiggs said, putting his hand on the reporter's flank. "But if we could just find some way to get him back into the house——" The jumper caught him by the shoulder and jerked

him backwards; again Jiggs caught balance, bouncing back, and saw the woman catch the jumper's arm as the jumper reached toward's the reporter's pocket.

"Get away yourself," she said. The jumper rose; he and the woman glared at one another— the one cold, hard, calm; the other tense, furious, restrained. Shumann had risen too; Jiggs looked quietly and intently from him to the others and back again.

"So you're going to do it yourself," the jumper said.

"Yes. I'm going to do it myself." They stared at one another for an instant longer, then they began to curse each other in short, hard, staccato syllables that sounded like slaps while Jiggs, his hands on his hips and leaning a little forward on his light-poised rubber soles, looked from them to Shumann and back again.

"All right," Shumann said. "That'll do now." He stepped between them, shoving the jumper a little. Then the woman stooped and while Jiggs turned the reporter's inert body from thigh to thigh she took from his pockets a few crumpled bills and a handful of silver.

"There's a five and four ones," Jiggs said. "Let me count that change."

"Three will pay the bus," Shumann said. "Just take three more."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Seven or eight will be plenty. Look. Leave him the five and one of the ones for change." He took the five and one of the ones from the woman's hand, folded them and thrust them into the reporter's fob pocket, and was about to rise when he saw the reporter looking at him, lying sprawled in the door with his eyes open and quiet and profoundly empty— that vision without contact yet with mind or thought, like two dead electric bulbs set into his skull. "Look," Jiggs said, "he's——" He sprang up, then he saw the jumper's face for the second before the jumper caught the woman's wrist and wrenched the money from her hand and flung it like a handful of gravel against the reporter's peaceful and open-eyed and sightless face and said in a tone of thin and despairing fury:

"I will eat and sleep on Roger and I will eat and sleep on you. But I won't eat and sleep on your ass, see?" He took up his bag and turned; he walked fast; Jiggs and the little boy watched him turn the alley mouth and vanish. Then Jiggs looked back at the woman who had not moved and at Shumann kneeling and gathering up the scattered coins and bills from about the reporter's motionless legs.

"Now we got to find some way to get him into the house," Jiggs said. They did not answer. But then he did not seem to expect or desire any answer. He knelt too and began to pick up the scattered coins. "Jesus," he said. "Jack sure threw them away. We'll be lucky to find half of them." But still they seemed to pay him no heed.

"How much was it?" Shumann said to the woman, extending his palm towards Jiggs.

"Six dollars and seventy cents," the woman said. Jiggs put the coins into Shumann's hand; as motionless as Shumann, Jiggs' hot eyes watched Shumann count the coins by sight.

"All right," Shumann said. "That other half."

"I'll just pick up some cigarettes with it," Jiggs said. Now Shumann didn't say anything at all; he just knelt with his hand out. After a moment Jiggs put the last coin into it. "O.K.," Jiggs said. His hot bright eyes were now completely unreadable; he did not even watch Shumann put the money into his pocket, he just took up his canvas bag. "Too bad we ain't got any way to get him off the street," he said.

"Yair," Shumann said, taking up the other bag. "We ain't, though. So let's go." He went on; he didn't even look back. It's a valve stem has stretched," he said. "I'll bet a quarter. That must be why she ran hot yesterday. We'll have to pull them all."

"Yair," Jiggs said. He walked behind the others, carrying the canvas bag. He didn't look back either yet; he stared at the back of Shumann's head with intent secret speculation, blank and even tranquil; he spoke to himself out of a sardonic reserve almost of humour: "Yair. I knew I would be sorry. Jesus, you would think I would have learned by now to save being honest

for Sunday. Because I was all right until . . . and now to be hung up on a bastard that . . ." He looked back. The reporter still lay propped in the doorway; the quiet, thoughtful, empty eyes seemed still to watch them gravely, without either surprise or reproach. "Jesus," Jiggs said aloud, "I told that guy last night it wasn't paregoric: it was laudanum or something . . ." because for a little while now he had forgot the jug, he was thinking about the reporter and not about the jug, until now. "And it won't be long now," he thought, with a sort of desperate outrage, his face perfectly calm, the boots striking through the canvas sack against his legs at each step as he walked behind the other three, his eyes hot, blank and dead as if they had been reversed in his skull and only the blank backsides showed while sight contemplated the hot wild secret coiling of drink netted and snared by the fragile web of flesh and nerves in which he lived, resided. "I will call the paper and tell them he is sick," he said out of that specious delusion of need and desire which even in this inviolable privacy brushed ruthlessly aside all admission of or awareness of lying or truth: "Maybe some of them will know some way to get in. I will tell him and Laverne that they asked me to wait and show them where . . ."

They reached the alley's mouth. Without pausing Shumann craned and peered up the street where the jumper had vanished. "Get on," Jiggs said. "We'll find him at the bus stop. He ain't going to walk out there no matter how much his feelings are hurt." But the jumper was not at the bus stop. The bus was about to depart but the jumper was not in it. Another had gone ten minutes before and Shumann and the woman described the jumper to the starter and he had not been in that one either. "He must have decided to walk out, after all," Jiggs said, moving towards the step. "Let's grab a seat."

"We might as well eat now," Shumann said. "Maybe he will come along before the next bus leaves."

"Sure," Jiggs said. "We could ask the bus driver to start taking off his overhead."

"Yes," the woman said, suddenly. "We can eat out there."

"We might miss him," Shumann said. "And he hasn't——"

"All right," she said; she spoke in a cold harsh tone, without looking at Jiggs. "Do you think that Jack will need more watching this morning than he will?" Now Jiggs could feel Shumann looking at him too, thoughtfully from within the machine symmetry of the new hat. But he did not move; he stood immobile, like one of the dummy figures which are wheeled out of slum-district stores and pawnshops at 8 a.m., quiet waiting and tranquil; and bemused too, the inturned vision watching something which was not even thought, supplying him, out of an inextricable whirl of half-caught pictures like a roulette wheel bearing printed sentences in place of numbers, with furious tag ends of plans and alternatives—telling them he had heard the jumper say he was going back to the place on Amboise Street and that he, Jiggs, would go there and fetch him—of escaping even for five minutes and striking the first person he met and then the next and the next and the next until he got a half-dollar; and lastly and this steadily, with a desperate conviction of truth and regret, that if Shumann would just hand him the coin and say go get a shot, he would not even take it, or lacking that, would take the one drink and then no more, out of sheer gratitude for having been permitted to escape from impotence and need and thinking and calculation by means of which he must even now keep his tone casual and innocent.

"Who, me?" he said. "Hell, I drank enough last night to do me a long time. Let's get on; he must have deadheaded out somehow."

"Yair," Shumann said, still watching him with that open and deadly seriousness. "We got to pull those valves and mike them. Listen. If things break right to-day, to-night I'll get you a bottle. O.K.?"

"Jesus," Jiggs said. "Have I got to get drunk again? Is that it? Come on; let's get a seat." They got in. The bus moved. It was better then, because even if he had the half-dollar he could not buy a drink with it until the bus either stopped or reached the airport, and also he was moving towards it at last; he thought again out of the thunder of solitude, the instant of exultation between the terror and the dismay: "They can't stop me. There

ain't enough of them to stop me. All I got to do is wait."—"Yair," he said, leaning forward between Shumann's and the woman's heads above the seat back in front of the one on which he and the boy sat, "he's probably already on the ship. I'll go right over and get on those valves and I can send him back to the restaurant." But they did not find the jumper at once at the airport either, though Shumann stood for a while and looked about the forenoon's deserted plaza as though he had expected to see the parachute jumper still in the succeeding elapse second from that in which he had walked out of sight beyond the alley's mouth. "I'll go on and get started," Jiggs said. "If he's in the hangar I'll send him on to the restaurant."

"We'll eat first," Shumann said. "You wait."

"I ain't hungry," Jiggs said. "I'll eat later. I want to get started——"

"No," the woman said; "Roger, don't——"

"Come on and eat some breakfast," Shumann said. It seemed to Jiggs that he stood a long time in the bright hazy sunlight with his jaws and the shape of his mouth aching a little, but it was not long probably, and anyway his voice seemed to sound all right too.

"O.K.," he said. "Let's go. They ain't my valves. I ain't going to ride behind them at three o'clock this afternoon." The rotunda was empty, the restaurant empty too save for themselves. "I just want some coffee," he said.

"Eat some breakfast," Shumann said. "Come on, now."

"I ain't any hungrier now than I was out there by that lamp-post two minutes ago," Jiggs said. But his voice was still all right. "I just said I would come in, see," he said. "I never said I would eat, see." Shumann watched him bleakly.

"Listen," he said. "You have had . . . was it two or three drinks this morning? Eat something. And to-night I will see that you have a couple or three drinks if you want. You can even get tight if you want. But now let's get those valves out." Jiggs sat perfectly still, looking at his hands on the table and then at the waitress's arm propped beside him, wrist nestled by four Woolworth bracelets, the finger-nails five spots of

crimson glitter as if they had been bought and clipped on to the finger-ends too.

"All right," he said. "Listen too. What do you want? A guy with two or three drinks in him helping you pull valves, or a guy with a gut full of food on top of the drinks, asleep in a corner somewhere? Just tell me what you want, see? I'll see you get it. Because listen. I just want coffee. I ain't even telling you; I'm just asking you. Jesus, would please do any good?"

"All right," Shumann said. "Just three breakfasts then," he said to the waitress. "And two extra coffees.—Damn Jack," he said. "He ought to eat too."

"We'll find him at the hangar," Jiggs said. They found him there, though not at once. When Shumann and Jiggs emerged from the tool-room in their dungarees and waited outside the chicken-wire door for the woman to change and join them, they saw first five or six other dungaree figures gathered about a sandwich board which had not been there yesterday, set in the exact centre of the hangar entrance—a big board lettered heavily by hand and possessing a quality cryptic and peremptory and for the time incomprehensible as though the amplifier had spoken the words:

NOTICE

> All contestants, all pilots and parachute jumpers and all others eligible to win cash prizes during this meet, are requested to meet in Superintendent's office at 12 noon to-day. All absentees will be considered to acquiesce and submit to the action and discretion of the race committee.

The others watched quietly while Shumann and the woman read it.

"Submit to what?" one of the others said. "What is it? Do you know?"

"I don't know," Shumann said. "Is Jack Holmes on the field yet? Has anybody seen him this morning?"

"There he is," Jiggs said. "Over at the ship, like I told you."

Shumann looked across the hangar. "He's already got the cowling off. See?"

"Yair," Shumann said. He moved at once. Jiggs spoke to the man beside whom he stood, almost without moving his lips.

"Lend me half a buck," he said. "I'll hand it back to-night. Quick." He took the coin; he snatched it; when Shumann reached the aeroplane Jiggs was right behind him. The jumper, crouched beneath the engine, looked up at them, briefly and without stopping, as he might have glanced up at the shadow of a passing cloud.

"You had some breakfast?" Shumann said.

"Yes," the jumper said, not looking up again.

"On what?" Shumann said. The other did not seem to have heard. Shumann took the money from his pocket—the remaining dollar bill, three quarters and some nickels, and laid two of the quarters on the engine mount at the jumper's elbow. "Go and get some coffee," he said. The other did not seem to hear, busy beneath the engine. Shumann stood watching the back of his head. Then the jumper's elbow struck the engine mount. The coins rang on the concrete floor and Jiggs stooped, ducking, and rose again, extending the coins before Shumann could speak or move.

"There they are," Jiggs said, not loud; he could not have been heard ten feet away: the fierceness, the triumph. "There they are. Count them. Count both sides so you will be sure." After that they did not talk any more. They worked quiet and fast, like a circus team, with the trained team's economy of motion, while the woman passed them the tools as needed; they did not even have to speak to her, to name the tool. It was easy now, like in the bus; all he had to do was to wait as the valves came out one by one and grew in a long neat line on the work-bench and then, sure enough, it came.

"It must be nearly twelve," the woman said. Shumann finished what he was doing. Then he looked at his watch and stood up, flexing his back and legs. He looked at the jumper.

"You ready?" he said.

"You are not going to wash up and change?" the woman said.

"I guess not," Shumann said. "It will be that much more time wasted." He took the money again from his pocket and gave the woman the three quarters. "You and Jiggs can get a bite when Jiggs gets the rest of the valves out. And, say"—he looked at Jiggs—"don't bother about trying to put the micrometer on them yourself. I'll do that when I get back. You can clean out the super-charger; that ought to hold you until we get back." He looked at Jiggs. "You ought to be hungry now."

"Yair," Jiggs said. He had not stopped; he did not watch them go out. He just squatted beneath the engine with the spraddled tenseness of an umbrella rib, feeling the woman looking at the back of his head. He spoke now without fury, without triumph, without sound: "Yair, beat it. You can't stop me. You couldn't stop me but for a minute even if you tried to hold me." He was not thinking of the woman as Laverne, as anyone: she was just the last and now swiftly fading residuum of the *it*, the *they*, watching the back of his head as he removed the super-charger without even knowing that she was all ready defeated.

"Do you want to eat now?" she said. He didn't answer. "Do you want me to bring you a sandwich?" He didn't answer. "Jiggs," she said. He looked up and back, his eyebrows rising and vanishing beyond the cap's peak, the hot bright eyes blank, interrogatory, arrested.

"What? How was that?" he said: "Did you call me?"

"Yes. Do you want to go and eat now or do you want me to bring you something?"

"No. I ain't hungry yet. I want to get done with this super-charger before I wash my hands. You go on." But she didn't move yet; she stood looking at him.

"I'll leave you some money and you can go when you are ready, then."

"Money?" he said. "What do I need with money up to my elbows in this engine?" She turned away then. He watched her pause and call the little boy, who came out of a group across the hangar and joined her; they went on towards the apron and disappeared. Then Jiggs rose; he laid the tool down carefully,

touching the coin in his pocket through the cloth, though he did not need to since he had never ceased to feel it. He was not thinking about her, not talking to her; he spoke without triumph or exultation, quietly: "Good-bye, you snooping bitch," he said.

But they had not been able to tell if the reporter had seen them or not, though he probably could neither see nor hear; certainly the thin youngish light-coloured negress who came up the alley about half-past nine, in a modish though not new hat and coat and carrying a wicker market-basket covered neatly with a clean napkin, decided almost immediately that he could not. She looked down at him for perhaps ten seconds with complete and impersonal speculation, then she waggled one hand before his face and called him by name: and when she reached into his pockets she did not move or shift his body at all; her hand reached in and drew out the two folded bills where Jiggs had put them with a single motion limber and boneless and softly rapacious as that of an octopus, then the hand made a second limber swift motion, inside her coat now, and emerged empty. It was her racial and sex nature to have taken but one of the bills, no matter how many there might have been—either the five or the one, depending upon her own need or desire of the moment or upon the situation itself—but now she took them both and stood again, looking down at the man in the doorway with a kind of grim though still impersonal sanctimoniousness.

"If he found any of hit left hit wouldn't learn him no lesson," she said, aloud. "Laying out here in the street, drunk. Ain't no telling where he been at, but hit couldn't a been much for them to let him git back out and that much money in his pocket." She took a key from somewhere beneath the coat and unlocked the door and caught him back in her turn as he began to tumble slowly and deliberately into the corridor, and entered herself. She was not gone long and now she carried the dish-pan of dirty water, which she flung suddenly into his face and caught him again as he gasped and started. "I hopes you had sense enough to left your pocket-book in the house fo you decided to take a nap out here," she cried, shaking him. "If you didn't, I bound all you got left now is the pocket-book." She carried him

up the cramped stairs almost bodily, like that much firehose, and left him apparently unconscious again on the cot and went beyond the curtain and looked once with a perfectly inscrutable face at the neat bed which but one glance told her was not her handiwork. From the basket she took an apron and a bright handkerchief; when she returned to the reporter she wore the apron and the handkerchief about her head in place of the hat and coat, and she carried the dish-pan filled now with fresh water, and soap and towels. She had done this before too, apparently, stripping the fouled shirt from the man who was her employer for this half-hour of the six weekdays, and both washing him off and slapping him awake during the process until he could see and hear again. "It's past ten o'clock," she said. "I done lit the gas so you can shave."

"Shave?" he said. "Didn't you know? I don't have to ever shave again. I'm fired."

"The more reason for you to git up from here and try to look like something." His hair, soaked, was plastered to his skull, yet it fitted no closer to the bones and ridges and joints than the flesh of his face did, and now his eyes did indeed look like holes burned with a poker in a parchment diploma, some post-graduate certificate of excess. Naked from the waist up, it seemed as if you not only saw his ribs front and side and rear, but that you also saw the entire rib-cage complete from any angle like you can see both warp and woof of screen wire from either side. He swayed laxly beneath her limber soft and ungentle hands, articulate and even collected though moving for a while yet in the twilight between the delusion of drunkenness and the delusion of sobriety.

"Are they gone?" he said. The negress's face and manner did not change at all.

"Is who gone?" she said.

"Yair," he said drowsily. "She was here last night. She slept yonder in the bed last night. There was just one of them slept with her and there could have been both of them. But she was here. And it was him himself that wouldn't let her drink, that took the glass out of her hand. Yair. I could hear all the long

soft waiting sound of all woman-meat in bed beyond the curtain." At first, for the moment, the negress did not even realize what it was touching her thigh until she looked down and saw the stick-like arm, the brittle light and apparently senseless hand like a bundle of dried twigs too, blundering and fumbling stiffly at her while in the gaunt eye-sockets the eyes looked like two spots of dying daylight caught by water at the bottom of abandoned wells. The negress did not become coy or outraged; she avoided the apparently blind or possibly just still insensible hand with a single supple shift of her hips, speaking to him, calling him by name, pronouncing the m.i.s.t.e.r. in full, in the flat lingering way of negroes, like it had two sets of two or three syllables each.

"Now then," she said, "if you feel like doing something yourself, take a holt of this towel. Or see how much of whatever money you think you had folks is left you, besides leaving you asleep on the street."

"Money?" he said. He waked completely now, his mind did, though even yet his hands fumbled for awhile before finding the pocket while the negress watched him, standing now with her hands on her hips. She said nothing else, she just watched his quiet bemused and intent face as he plumbed his empty pockets one by one. She did not mention company again; it was he who cried, "I was out there, asleep in the alley. You know that, you found me. I left here, I was out there asleep because I forgot the key and I couldn't get in again; I was out there a long time even before daylight. You know I was." Still she said nothing, watching him. "I remember just when I quit remembering!"

"How much did you have when you quit remembering?"

"Nothing!" he said. "Nothing. I spent it all. See?" When he got up she offered to help him back to the bedroom, but he refused. He walked unsteadily still, but well enough, and when after a time she followed him she could hear him through the beaver-board wall of the alcove somewhat larger than a clothes closet which she entered too and set water to heat on the gas plate beside which he was shaving, and prepared to make coffee. She gave the undisturbed bedroom another cold inscrutable look

and returned to the front room and restored the tumbled cot, spreading the blanket and the pillows. Picking up the soiled shirt and the towel from the floor and pausing, laying the shirt on the couch but still carrying the towel, she went to the table and looked at the jug now with that bemused inscrutable expression. She wiped one of the stick glasses with finicking care and poured into it from the jug almost what a thimble would have held and drank it, the smallest finger of that hand crooked delicately, in a series of birdlike and apparently extremely distasteful sips. Then she gathered up what she could conveniently carry of the night's misplaced litter and returned beyond the curtain, though when she went to where she had set the basket on the floor against the wall with the hat and coat lying upon it, you could not hear her cross the floor at all nor stoop and take from the basket an empty pint bottle sparklingly clean as a sterilized milk bottle. Ordinarily she would not have filled the flask at any single establishment of her morning round, on the contrary filling the bottle little by little with a sort of niggard and foresighted husbandry and arriving at home in mid-afternoon with a pint of liquid weird, potent, anonymous, and strange; but once more she seemed to find the situation its own warrant, returning and putting the filled flask back into the basket still without any sound. The reporter heard only the broom for a time, and other muted sounds as though the room were putting itself to rights by means of some ghostly and invisible power of its own, until she came at last to the alcove's doorway, where he stood tying his tie, with the hat and coat on again and the basket beneath its neat napkin again on her arm.

"I'm through," she said. "The coffee's ready, but you better not waste no time over drinking hit."

"All right," he said. "I'll have to make another loan from you."

"You won't need but a dime to get to the paper. Ain't you got even that much left?"

"I ain't going to the paper. I'm fired, I tell you. I want two dollars."

"I has to work for my money. Last time I lent you hit took you three weeks to start paying me back."

"I know. But I have to have it. Come on, Leonora. I'll pay you back Saturday." She reached inside her coat; one of the bills was his own.

"The key's on the table," she said. "I washed hit off too." It lay there, on the table clean and empty save for the key; he took it up and mused upon it with that face which the few hours of violent excess had altered from that of one brightly and peacefully dead to that of one coming back from, or looking out of, hell itself.

"But it's all right," he said. "It don't matter. It ain't anything." He stood in the clean empty room where there was not even a cigarette-stub or a burned match to show any trace. "Yair. She didn't even leave a hair-pin," he thought. "Or maybe she don't use them. Or maybe I was drunk and they were not even here"; looking down at the key with a grimace faint and tragic which might have been called smiling while he talked to himself, giving himself the advice which he knew he was not going to take when he insisted on borrowing the two dollars. "Because I had thirty before I spent the eleven-eighty and then the five for the absinth. That left about thirteen." Then he cried, not loud, not moving: "Besides, maybe she will tell me. Maybe she intended to all the time but they couldn't wait for me to come to," without even bothering to tell himself that he knew he was lying, just saying quietly and stubbornly, "All right. But I'm going anyway. Even if I don't do anything but walk up where she can see me and stand there for a minute."

He held the key in his hand now while the door clicked behind him, standing for a moment longer with his eyes shut against the impact of light, of the thin sun, and then opening them, steadying himself against the door frame where he had slept, remembering the coffee which the negress had made and he had forgot about until now, while the alley swam away into mirage shapes, tilting like the sea or say the lake surface, against which the ordeal of destination, of hope and dread, shaped among the outraged nerves of vision the bright vague pavilion glitter beneath the whipping purple-and-gold pennons. "It's all right," he said. "It ain't nothing but money. It don't matter."

It was not two when he reached the airport, but already the parking lots along the boulevard were filling, with the young men paid doubtless out of some wearily initialled national fund, in the purple-and-gold caps lent or perhaps compulsory, clinging to running-boards, moving head-and-shoulders above the continuous top-line of already parked cars as though they consisted of torsos alone and ran on wires for no purpose and towards no discernible destination. A steady stream of people flowed along the concrete gutters, converging towards the entrances, but the reporter did not follow. To the left was the hangar where they would be now, but he did not go there either; he just stood in the bright hazy-damp-filled sunlight, with the pennons whipping stiffly overhead and the wind which blew them seeming to blow through him too, not cold, not unpleasant: just whipping his clothing about him as if it blew unimpeded save by the garment, through his rib-cage and among his bones. "I ought to eat,'" he thought. "I ought to," not moving yet as though he hung static in a promise made to someone which he did not believe even yet that he was going to break. The restaurant was not far; already it seemed to him that he could hear the clash and clatter and the voices and smell the food, thinking of the three of them yesterday while the little boy burrowed with flagging determination into the second plate of ice-cream. Then he could hear the sounds, the noise, and smell the food itself as he stood looking at the table where they had sat yesterday, where a family group from a grandmother to an infant in arms now sat. He went to the counter. "Breakfast," he said.

"What do you want to eat?" the waitress said.

"What do people eat for breakfast?" he said, looking at her—a porcelain-faced woman whose hair, complexion and uniform appeared to have been made of various shades of that material which old-time book-keepers used to protect their sleeves with—and smiling: or he would have called it smiling. "That's right. It ain't breakfast now, is it?"

"What do you want to eat?"

"Roast beef," his mind said at last. "Potatoes," he said. "It don't matter."

"Sandwich or lunch?"

"Yes," he said.

"Yes, what? You wanna order don't you wanna?"

"Sandwich," he said.

"Mash one!" the waitress cried.

"And that's that," he thought, as though he had discharged the promise; as though by ordering, acquiescing to the idea, he had eaten the food too. "And then I will . . ." Only the hangar was not the mirage but the restaurant, the counter, the clash and clatter, the sound of food and of eating. It seemed to him that he could see the group: the aeroplane, the four dungaree figures, the little boy in dungarees too, himself approaching: *I hope you found everything you wanted before you left? Yes, thank you. It was thirteen dollars. Just till Saturday—No matter; it don't matter; don't even think of it.* Now suddenly he heard the amplifier too in the rotunda; it had been speaking for some time but he had just noticed it:

". . . second day of the Feinman Airport dedication invitation meet held under the official rules of the American Aeronautical Association and through the courtesy of the city of New Valois and of Colonel H. I. Feinman, Chairman of the Sewage Board of New Valois. Events for the afternoon as follows . . ." He quit listening to it then, drawing from his pocket the pamphlet programme of yesterday and opening it at the second fading imprint of the mimeograph:

FRIDAY

2.30 p.m.	Spot Parachute Jump. Purse $25.00.
3.00 p.m.	Scull Speed Dash. 375 cu. in. Qualifying speed 180 m.p.h. Purse $325.00 (1, 2, 3, 4).
3.30 p.m.	Aerial Acrobatics. Jules Despleins, France. Lieut. Frank Burnham, United States.
4.30 p.m.	Scull Speed Dash. 575 cu. in. Qualifying speed, 200 m.p.h. Purse $650.00 (1, 2, 3, 4).
5.00 p.m.	Delayed Parachute Drop.
8.00 p.m.	Special Mardi Gras Evening Event. Rocket Plane. Lieut. Frank Burnham.

He continued to look at the page long after the initial impact of optical surprise had faded. "That's all," he said. "That's all she would have to do. Just tell me they . . . It ain't the money. She knows it ain't that. It ain't the money with me any more than it is with them," he said; the man had to speak to him twice before the reporter knew he was there. "Hello," he said.

"So you got out here after all," the other said. Behind the man stood another, a short man with morose face, carrying a newspaper camera.

"Yes," the reporter said. "Hi, Jug," he said to the second man. The first looked at him curiously.

"You look like you have been dragged through hell by the heels," he said. "You going to cover this to-day too?"

"Not that I know of," the reporter said. "I understand I am fired. Why?"

"I was about to ask you. Hagood phoned me at four this morning, out of bed. He told me to come out to-day and if you were not here, to cover it. But mostly to watch out for you if you came and to tell you to call him at this number." He took a folded strip of paper from his vest and gave it to the reporter. "It's the country club. He said to call him as soon as I found you."

"Thanks," the reporter said. But he did not move. The other looked at him.

"Well, what do you want to do? You want to cover it or you want me to?"

"No. I mean, yes. You take it. It don't matter. Jug knows better what Hagood wants than you or I either."

"O.K.," the other said. "Better call Hagood right away, though."

"I will," the reporter said. Now the food came: the heaped indestructible plate and the hand scrubbed, with vicious coral nails, the hand too looking as if it had been conceived formed and baked in the kitchen, or perhaps back in town and sent out by light and speedy truck along with the scrolled squares of pastry beneath the plate-glass counter. He looked at both the food and the hand from the crest of a wave of pure almost physical

flight. "Jesus, sister," he said, "I was joking with the wrong man, wasn't I?" But he drank the coffee and ate some of the food; he seemed to watch himself creeping slowly and terrifically across the plate like a mole, blind to all else and deaf now even to the amplifier; he ate a good deal of it, sweating, seeming to chew for ever and ever before getting each mouthful in position to be swallowed. "I guess that'll be enough," he said at last. "Jesus, it will have to be," he said. He was in the rotunda now and moving towards the gates into the stands before he remembered and turned and breasted the stream towards the entrance and so outside and into the bright soft hazy sunlight with its quality of having been recently taken out of water and not yet thoroughly dried and full of the people, the faces, the cars coming up and discharging and moving on. Across the plaza the hangar wing seemed to sway and quiver like a grounded balloon. "But I feel better," he thought. "I must. They would not have let me eat all that and not feel better because I can't possibly feel as bad as I still think I do." He could hear the voice again now from the amplifier above the entrace.

". . . wish to announce that due to the tragic death of Lieutenant Frank Burnham last night, the airport race committee has discontinued the evening events. . . . The time is now one-forty-two. The first event on to-day's programme will . . ." The reporter stopped.

"One-forty-two," he thought. Now he could feel something which must have been the food he had just eaten beating slow and steady against his skull which up to this time had been empty, had hardly troubled him at all except for the sensation of being about to float off like one of the small balloons escaped from the hand of a child at a circus, trying to remember what hour the programme had allotted to the three hundred and seventy-five cubic inch race, thinking that perhaps when he got into the shade he could bear to look at the programme again. "Since it seems I am bound to offer her the chance to tell me that they stole . . . not the money. It's not the money. It's not that." Now the shade of the hangar fell upon him and he could see the programme again, the faint mimeographed letters

beating and pulsing against his cringing eyeballs and steadying at last so that he could read his watch. It would be an hour still before he could expect to find her alone.

He turned and followed the hangar wall and passed beyond it. Across the way the parking lot was almost full and there was another stream here, moving towards the bleachers. Though he stood on the edge of it while his eyeballs still throbbed and watched the other fringe, slowing and clotting before one of the temporary wooden refreshment booths which had sprung up about the borders of the airport property as the photographs of the pilots and machines had bloomed in the shop windows down town, it was some time before he began to realize that something beside the spectacle (still comparatively new) of outdoors drinking must be drawing them. Then he thought he recognized the voice and then he did recognize the raked filthy swagger of the cap and moved, pressing, filtering, on and into the crowd and so came between Jiggs' drunken belligerent face and the Italian face of the booth's proprietor who was leaning across the counter and shouting,

"Bastard, huh? You theenk bastard, hey?"

"What is it?" the reporter said. Jiggs turned and looked at him for a moment of hot blurred concentration without recognition; it was the Italian who answered.

"For me, nothing!" he shouted. "He come here, he have one drink two drink; he no need either one of them but O.K.; he pay; that O.K. for me. Then he say he wait for friend, that he have one more drink to surprise friend. That not so good, but my wife she give it to him and that maka three drink he don't need and I say, You pay and go, eh? Beat it. And he say, O.K., good-bye and I say Why you no pay, eh? and he say That drink to surprise friend; looka like it surprise you too, eh? and I grab to hold and call policaman because I don't want for trouble with drunk and he say bastard to me before my wife. . . ." Still Jiggs did not move. Even while holding himself upright by the counter he gave that illusion of tautly sprung steel set delicately on a hair trigger.

"Yair," he said. "Three drinks, and just look what they done

to me!" on a rising note which stopped before it became idiotic laughter; whereupon he stared again at the reporter with that blurred gravity, watching while the reporter took the second of the two dollar bills which the negress had loaned him and gave it to the Italian. "There you are, Columbus," Jiggs said. "Yair. I told him. Jesus, I even tried to tell him your name, only I couldn't remember it." He looked at the reporter with hot intensity, like an astonished child. "Say, that guy last night told me your name. Is that it, sure enough? you swear to Christ, no kidding?"

"Yair," the reporter said. He put his hand on Jiggs' arm. "Come on. Let's go." The spectators had moved on now. Behind the counter the Italian and his wife seemed to pay them no more attention. "Come on," the reporter said. "It must be after two. Let's go help get the ship ready and then I'll buy another drink." But Jiggs did not move, and then the reporter found Jiggs watching him with something curious, calculating and intent, behind the hot eyes; they were not blurred now at all, and suddenly Jiggs stood erect before the reporter could steady him.

"I was looking for you," Jiggs said.

"I came along at the right time, didn't I, for once in my life. Come on. Let's go to the hangar. I imagine they are waiting for you there. Then I will buy a——"

"I don't mean that," Jiggs said. "I was kidding the guy. I had the quarter, all right. I've had all I want. Come on." He led the way, walking a little carefully yet still with the light spring-like steps, bumping and butting through the gateward stream of people, the reporter following, until they were beyond it and clear; anyone who approached them now would have to do so deliberately and should have been visible a hundred yards away, though neither of them saw the parachute jumper who was doing just that.

"You mean the ship's all ready?" the reporter said.

"Sure," Jiggs said. "Roger and Jack ain't even there. They have gone to the meeting."

"Meeting?"

"Sure. Contestants' meeting. To strike, see? But listen——"

"To strike?"

"Sure. For more jack. It ain't the money: it's the principle of the thing. Jesus, what do we need with money?" Jiggs began to laugh again on that harsh note which stopped just as it became laughter and started before it was mirth. "But that ain't it. I was looking for you." Again the reporter looked at the hot unreadable eyes. "Laverne sent me. She said to give me five dollars for her." The reporter's face did not change at all. Neither did Jiggs'; the hot impenetrable eyes, the membrane and fibre netting and webbing the unrecking and the undismayed. "Roger was in the money yesterday; you'll get it back Saturday. Only if it was me, I wouldn't even wait for that. Just let her underwrite you, see?"

"Underwrite me?"

"Sure. Then you wouldn't even have to bother to put anything back into your pocket. All you would have to do would be to button up your pants." Still the reporter's face did not change, his voice did not change, not loud, without amazement.

"Do you reckon I could?"

"I don't know," Jiggs said. "Didn't you ever try it? It's done every night somewhere, so I hear. Probably done right here in New Valois, even. And if you can't, she can show you how." The reporter's face did not change; he was just looking at Jiggs and then suddenly Jiggs moved, sudden and complete; the reporter saw the hot secret eyes come violently alive and, turning, the reporter also saw the parachute jumper's face.

That was a little after two o'clock; Shumann and the jumper had been in the Superintendent's office from twelve until fifteen to one. They had passed through the same discreet door which Jiggs had used the afternoon before and had gone on through the ante-room and into a place like a board-room in a bank—a long table with a row of comfortable chairs behind it, in which sat perhaps a dozen men who might have been found about any such table back in town, and another group of chairs made out of steel and painted to resemble wood, in which with a curious gravity something like that of the older and better behaved

boys in a reform school on Christmas Eve, sat the other men who ordinarily at this hour would have been working over the aeroplanes in the hangar—the pilots and parachute jumpers, in greasy dungarees or leather jackets almost as foul—the quiet sober faces looking back as Shumann and the jumper entered. Just as the blue serge of last night was absent, so were the tweed coats and ribbon badges, with one exception. This was the microphone's personified voice. He sat with neither group, his chair which should have been at the end of the table drawn several feet away as though he were preparing to tip it back against the wall. But he was as grave as either group; the scene was exactly that of the conventional conference between the mill owners and the delegation from the shops, the announcer representing the labour lawyer—that man who was once a labourer himself but from whose hands the calluses have now softened and whitened away so that, save for something nameless and ineradicable about his clothing—a quality incorrigibly dissenting and perhaps even bizarre—which distinguishes him for ever from the men behind the table as well as from the men before it, as the badge of the labour organization in his lapel establishes him for ever as one of them, he might actually sit behind the table too. But he did not. But the very slightness of the distance between him and the table established a gap more unbridgable even than that between the table and the second group, as if he had been stopped in the midst of a violent movement, if not of protest at least of dissent, by the entrance into the room of the men in whose absent names he dissented. He nodded to Shumann and the jumper as they found chairs, then he turned to the thick-faced man at the centre of the table.

"They're all here now," he said. The men behind the table murmured to one another.

"We must wait for him," the thick-faced man said. He raised his voice. "We are waiting for Colonel Feinman, men," he said. He took a watch from his vest; three or four others looked at their watches. "He instructed us to have everyone present at twelve o'clock. He has been delayed. You can smoke, if you like." Some of the second group began to smoke, passing lighted

matches, speaking quietly like a school class which has been told that it can talk for a moment:

"What is it?"

"I don't know. Maybe something about Burnham."

"Oh, yair. Probably that's it."

"Hell, they don't need all of us to——"

"Say, what do you suppose happened?"

"Blinded, probably."

"Yair. Blinded."

"Yair. Probably couldn't read his altimeter at all. Or maybe forgot to watch it. Flew it right into the ground."

"Yair. Jesus, I remember one time I was——" They smoked. Sometimes they held the cigarettes like dynamite caps so as not to spill the ash, looking quietly about the clean new floor; sometimes they spilled the ashes discreetly down their legs. But finally the stubs were too short to hold. One of them rose; the whole room watched him cross to the table and take up an ash-tray made to resemble a radial engine and bring it back and start it passing along the three rows of chairs like a church collection plate. Shumann looked at his watch and it was twenty-five minutes past twelve. He spoke quietly to the announcer, as though they were alone in the room:

"Listen, Hank. I've got all my valves out. I have got to put the micrometer on them before I——"

"Yair," the announcer said. He turned to the table. "Listen," he said. "They are all here now. And they have got to get the ships ready for the race at three; Mr. Shumann there has got all his valves out. So can't you tell them without waiting for F—— Colonel Feinman? They will agree, all right. I told you that. There ain't anything else they can—I mean they will agree."

"Agree to what?" the man beside Shumann said. But the chairman, the thick-faced man, was already speaking.

"Colonel Feinman said——"

"Yair." The announcer spoke patiently. "But these boys have got to get their ships ready. We've got to be ready to give these people that are buying the tickets out there something to look

at." The men behind the table murmured again, the others watching them quietly.

"Of course we can take a straw vote now," the chairman said. Now he looked at them and cleared his throat. "Gentlemen, the committee representing the business men of New Valois who have sponsored this meet and offered you the opportunity to win these cash prizes——" The announcer turned to him.

"Wait," he said. "Let me tell them." He turned now to the grave almost identical faces of the men in the hard chairs; he spoke quietly too. "It's about the programmes. The printed ones—you know. With the setup for each day. They were all printed last week and so they have still got Frank's name on them——" The chairman interrupted him now:

"And the committee wants to express here and now to you other pilots who were con——" Now he was interrupted by one of the men beside him:

"—and on behalf of Colonel Feinman."

"Yes—and on behalf of Colonel Feinman—contemporaries and friends of Lieutenant Burnham, its sincere regret at last night's unfortunate accident."

"Yair," the announcer said; he had not even looked towards the speaker, he just waited until he had got through. "So they—the committee—feel that they are advertising something they can't produce. They feel that Frank's name should come off the programme. I agree with them there and I know you will too."

"Why not take it off, then?" one of the second group said.

"Yes," the announcer said. "They are going to. But the only way they can do that is to have new programmes printed, you see." But they did not see yet. They just looked at him, waiting. The chairman cleared his throat, though at the moment there was nothing for him to interrupt.

"We had these programmes printed for your benefit and convenience as contestants, as well as that of the spectators, without whom I don't have to remind you there would be no cash prizes for you to win. So you see, in a sense you contestants are the real benefactors of these printed programmes. Not us; the schedule of these events can be neither information nor surprise

to us, since we were privy to the arranging of them even if we are not to the winning—since we have been given to understand (and I may add, have seen for ourselves) that air racing has not yet reached the, ah, scientific heights of horse-racing——" He cleared his throat again; a thin polite murmur of laughter rose from about the table and died away. "We had these programmes printed at considerable expense, none of which devolved on you, yet they were planned and executed for your—I won't say profit, but convenience and benefit. We had them printed in good faith that what we guaranteed in them would be performed; we knew no more than you did that that unfortunate ac——"

"Yes," the announcer said. "It's like this. Somebody has got to pay to have new programmes printed. These g—— this . . . they say we—the contestants and announcers and everybody drawing jack from the meet, should do it." They did not make a sound, the still faces did not change expression; it was the announcer himself, speaking now in a tone urgent, almost pleading, where no dissent had been offered or intimated: "It's just two and a half per cent. We're all in it; I'm in it, too. Just two and a half per cent.; when it comes out of prize money, like they say, you won't notice it because you haven't got it anyway until after the cut is taken out. Just two and a half per cent., and——" The man in the second group spoke for the second time:

"Or else?" he said. The announcer did not answer. After a moment Shumann said:

"Is that all?"

"Yes," the announcer said. Shumann rose.

"I better get back on my valves," he said. Now when he and the jumper crossed the rotunda the crowd was trickling steadily through the gates. They worked into line and shuffled up to the gates too before they learned that they would have to have grand-stand tickets to pass. So they turned and worked towards the hangar, walking now in a thin deep drone from somewhere up in the sun, though presently they could see them—a flight of army pursuit single seaters circling the field in formation to

land and then coming in, fast, blunt-nosed, fiercely-raked, viciously powerful. "They're over-souped," Shumann said. "They will kill you if you don't watch them. I wouldn't want to do that for two-fifty-six a month."

"You wouldn't be cut two and a half per cent. while you were out to lunch though," the jumper said savagely. "What's two and a half per cent. of twenty-five bucks?"

"It ain't the whole twenty-five," Shumann said. "I hope Jiggs has got that super-charger ready to go back." So they had almost reached the aeroplane before they discovered that it was the woman and not Jiggs at work on it and that she had put the super-charger back on with the engine head still off and the valves still out. She rose and brushed her hair back with the flat of her wrist, though they had asked no question.

"Yes," she said. "I thought he was all right. I went out to eat and left him here."

"Have you seen him since?" Shumann said. "Do you know where he is now?"

"What the hell does that matter?" the jumper said in a tense furious voice. "Let's get the damned super-charger off and put the valves in." He looked at the woman, furious, restrained. "What has this guy done to you? given you a dose of faith in mankind like he would syphilis or consumption or whatever it is, that will even make you trust Jiggs?"

"Come on," Shumann said. "Let's get the super-charger off. I guess he didn't check the valve stems either, did he?"

"I don't know," she said.

"Well, no matter. They lasted out yesterday. And we haven't time now. But maybe we can get on the line by three if we don't stop to check them." They were ready before that; they had the aeroplane on the apron and the engine running before three, and then the jumper who had worked in grimy fury turned away, walking fast even though Shumann called after him. He went straight to where Jiggs and the reporter stood. He could not have known where to find them, yet he went straight to them as though led by some blind instinct out of fury. He walked into Jiggs' vision and struck him on the jaw so that the surprise

the alarm and the shock were almost simultaneous, hitting him again before he finished falling and then whirling as the reporter caught his arm.

"Here! here!" the reporter cried. "He's drunk! You can't hit a——" But the jumper didn't say a word; the reporter saw the continuation of the turning become the blow of the fist. He didn't feel the blow at all. "I'm too light to be knocked down or even hit hard," he thought; he was still telling himself that while he was being raised up again and while the hands held him upright on his now boneless legs and while he looked at Jiggs sitting up now in a small stockade of legs and a policeman shaking him. "Hello, Leblanc," the reporter said. The policeman looked at him now.

"So it's you, hey?" the policeman said. "You got some news this time, ain't you? Something to put in the paper that people will like to read. Reporter knocked down by irate victim, hey? That's news." He began to prod Jiggs with the side of his shoe. "Who's this? Your substitute? Get up. On your feet now."

"Wait," the reporter said. "It's all right. He wasn't in it. He's one of the mechanics here. An aviator."

"I see," the policeman said, hauling at Jiggs' arm. "Aviator, hey? He don't look very high to me. Or may be it was a cloud hit him in the jaw, hey?"

"Yes. He's just drunk. I'll be responsible; I tell you he wasn't even in it; the guy hit him by mistake. Leave him be, Leblanc."

"What do I want with him?" the policeman said. "So you're responsible, are you? Get him up out of the street, then." He turned and began to shove at the ring of people. "Go; beat it; get on, now," he said. "The race is about to start. Go on, now." So presently they were alone again, the reporter standing carefully, balancing, on his weightless legs ("Jesus," he thought, "I'm glad now I am light enough to float"), feeling gingerly his jaw, thinking with peaceful astonishment, "I never felt it at all. Jesus, I didn't think I was solid enough to be hit that hard but I must have been wrong." He stooped, still gingerly, and began to pull at Jiggs' arm until after a time Jiggs looked up at him blankly.

"Come on," the reporter said. "Let's get up."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Yair. Get up."

"Yes," the reporter said. "Come on, now." Jiggs rose slowly, the reporter steadying him; he stood blinking at the reporter.

"Jesus," he said. "What happened?"

"Yes," the reporter said. "But it's all right now. It's all over now. Come on. Where do you want to go?" Jiggs moved, the reporter beside him, supporting him; suddenly Jiggs recoiled; looking up, the reporter also saw the hangar door a short distance away.

" Not there," Jiggs said.

"Yes," the reporter said. "We don't want to go there." They turned; the reporter led the way now, working them clear again of the people passing towards the stands. He could feel his jaw beginning to ache now, and looking back and upward he watched the aeroplanes come into position one by one as beneath them each dropping body bloomed into parachute. "And I never even heard the bomb," he thought. "Or maybe that was what I thought hit me." He looked at Jiggs walking stiffly beside him, as though the spring steel of his legs had been reft by enchantment of temper and were now mere dead iron. "Listen," he said. He stopped and stopped Jiggs too, looking at him and speaking to him tediously and carefully as though Jiggs were a child. "I've got to go to town. To the paper. The boss sent for me to come in, see? Now you tell me where you want to go. You want to go somewhere and lie down awhile? Maybe I can find a car where you can——"

"No," Jiggs said. "I'm all right. Go on."

"Yes. Sure. But you ought——" Now all the parachutes were open; the sunny afternoon was filled with down-cupped blooms like inverted water hyacinths; the reporter shook Jiggs a little. "Come on, now. What's next now, after the chute jumps?"

"What?" Jiggs said. "Next? What next?"

"Yes. What? Can't you remember?"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Next." For a full moment the reporter looked down at Jiggs with a faint lift of one side of his mouth as

though favouring his jaw, not of concern or regret or even hopelessness so much as of faint and quizzical foreknowledge.

"Yes," he said. He took the key from his pocket. "Can you remember this, then?" Jiggs looked at the key, blinking. Then he stopped blinking.

"Yair," he said. "It was on the table right by the jug. And then we got hung up on the bastard laying there in the door and I let the door shut behind . . ." He looked at the reporter, peering at him, blinking again. "For Christ's sake," he said. "Did you bring it too?"

"No," the reporter said.

"Hell. Gimme the key; I will go and——"

"No," the reporter said. He put the key back into his pocket and took out the change which the Italian had given him, the three quarters. "You said five dollars. But I haven't got that much. This is all I have. But that will be all right because if it was a hundred it would be the same; it would not be enough because all I have never is, you see? Here." He put the three quarters into Jiggs' hand. For a moment Jiggs looked at his hand without moving. Then the hand closed; he looked at the reporter while his face seemed to collect, to become sentient.

"Yair," he said. "Thanks. It's O.K. You'll get it back Saturday. We're in the money now; Roger and Jack and the others struck this afternoon, see? Not for the money: for the principle of the thing, see?"

"Yes," the reporter said. He turned and went on. Now he could feel his jaw quite distinctly through the faint grimace of smiling, the grimace thin, bitter and wrung. "Yes. It ain't the money. That ain't it. That don't matter." He heard the bomb this time and saw the five aeroplanes dart upward, diminishing, as he reached the apron, beginning to pass the spaced amplifiers and the rich voice:

". . . second event. Three-seventy-five cubic inch class. Some of the same boys that gave you a good race yesterday, except Myers, who is out of this race to save up for the five-fifty later this afternoon. But Ott and Bullitt are out there, and Roger Shumann who surprised us all yesterday by taking second in a

field that——" He found her almost at once; she had not changed from the dungarees this time. He extended the key, feeling his jaw plainer and plainer through his face's grimace.

"Make yourselves at home," he said. "As long as you want to. I'm going to be out of town for a few days. So I may not even see you again. But you can just drop the key in an envelope and address it to the paper. And make yourselves at home; there is a woman comes every morning but Sunday to clean up. . . ." The five aeroplanes came in on the first lap: the snarl, the roar banking into a series of down-wind scuttering pops as each one turned the pylon and went on.

"You mean you're not going to need the place yourself at all?" she said.

"No. I won't be there. I am going out of town on an assignment."

"I see. Well, thanks. I wanted to thank you for last night, but . . ."

"Yair," he said. "So I'll beat it. You can say good-bye to the others for me."

"Yes. But are you sure it won't . . ."

"Sure. It's all right. You make yourselves at home." He turned; he began to walk fast, thinking fast, "Now if I only can just . . ." He heard her call him twice; he thought of trying to run on his boneless legs and knew that he would fall, hearing her feet just behind him now, thinking, "No. No. Don't. That's all I ask. No. No." Then she was beside him; he stopped and turned, looking down at her.

"Listen," she said. "We took some money out of your . . ."

"Yes. I knew. It's O.K. You can hand it back. Put it in the envelope with the . . ."

"I intended to tell you as soon as I saw you to-day. It was . . ."

"Yair; sure." He spoke loudly now, turning again, fleeing before yet beginning to move. "Any time. Good-bye now."

"We took six-seventy. We left . . ." Her voice died away; she stared at him, at the thin rigid grimace which could hardly have been called smiling but which could have been called

nothing else. "How much did you find in your pocket this morning?"

"It was all there," he said. "Just the six-seventy was missing. It was all right." He began to walk. The aeroplanes came in and turned the field pylon again as he was passing through the gate and into the rotunda. When he entered the bar the first face he saw was that of the photographer whom he had called Jug.

"I ain't going to offer you a drink," the photographer said, "because I never buy them for nobody. I wouldn't even buy Hagood one."

"I don't want a drink," the reporter said. "I just want a dime."

" A dime? Hell, that's damn near the same as a drink."

"It's to call Hagood with. That will look better on your expense account than a drink would." There was a booth in the corner; he called the number from the slip which the substitute had given him. After awhile Hagood answered. "Yair, I'm out here," the reporter said. "Yair, I feel O.K. . . . Yair, I want to come in. Take something else, another assignment. . . . Yair, out of town if you got anything, for a day or so if you . . . Yair. Thanks, chief. I'll come right on in." He had to walk through the voice again to pass through the rotunda, and again it met him outside though for the moment he did not listen to it for listening to himself: "It's all the same! I did the same thing myself! I don't intend to pay Hagood either! I lied to him about money too!" and the answer, loud too: "You lie, you bastard. You're lying, you son of a bitch." So he was hearing the amplifier before he knew that he was listening, just as he had stopped and half turned before he knew that he had stopped, in the bright thin sunlight filled with mirage shapes which pulsed against his painful eyelids: so that when two uniformed policemen appeared suddenly from beyond the hangar with Jiggs struggling between them, his cap in one hand and one eye completely closed now and a long smear of blood on his jaw, the reporter did not even recognize him; he was now staring at the amplifier above the door as though he were actually seeing in it what he merely heard:

"—Shumann's in trouble; he's out of the race; he's turning out to— He's cut his switch and he's going to land; I don't know what it is, but he's swinging wide; he's trying to keep clear of the other ships and he's pretty wide and that lake's pretty wet to be out there without any motor.—Come on, Roger; get back into the airport, guy!—He's in now; he's trying to get back on to the runway to land and it looks like he'll make it all right, but the sun is right in his eyes and he swung mighty wide to keep clear of— I don't know about this —I don't— Hold her head up, Roger! Hold her head up! Hold——"

The reporter began to run; it was not the crash that he heard: it was a single long exhalation of human breath as though the microphone had reached out and caught that too out of all the air which people had ever breathed. He ran back through the rotunda and through the suddenly clamorous mob at the gate, already tugging out his police card; it was as though all the faces, all the past twenty-four hours' victories and defeats and hopes and renunciations and despairs, had been blasted completely out of his life as if they had actually been the random sheets of that organ to which he dedicated his days, caught momentarily upon one senseless member of the scarecrow which he resembled, and then blown away. A moment later, above the heads streaming up the apron and beyond the ambulance and the fire truck and the motor-cyle squad rushing across the field, he saw the aeroplane lying on its back, the under-carriage projecting into the air rigid and delicate and motionless as the legs of a dead bird.

Two hours later, at the bus stop on the Grandlieu Street corner, from where she and Shumann stood a few feet away, the woman could see the reporter standing quietly as he had emerged from the bus and surrendered the four tickets for which he had paid. She could not tell who or what he was looking at: his face was just peaceful, waiting, apparently inattentive even when the parachute jumper limped over to him, dragging savagely the leg which even through the cloth of the trousers appeared thick, stiff and ungainly with the emergency dressing from the airport's surgery, result of having been drifted by an

unforeseen wind-gust over the stands and then slammed into one of the jerry-built refreshment booths when landing his parachute.

"Look here," he said. "This afternoon, I was mad at Jiggs. I never meant to sock you. I was worried and mad. I even thought it was still Jiggs' face until too late."

"It's all right," the reporter said. He was not smiling: he was just peaceful and serene. "I guess I just got in the way."

"I didn't plan to. If you want any satisfaction——"

"It's all right," the reporter said. They didn't shake hands; the jumper just turned after a moment and dragged his leg back to where he had been standing, leaving the reporter as before, in that attitude of peaceful waiting. The woman looked at Shumann again.

"Then if the ship's all right, why won't Ord fly it himself, race it himself?" she said.

"Maybe he don't have to," Shumann said. "If I had his Ninety-Two I wouldn't need this ship either. I guess Ord would do the same. Besides, I—we haven't got it yet. So there ain't anything to worry about. Because if it is a bum, Ord won't let us have it. Yair, you see? if we can get it, that's proof that it's O.K. because Ord wouldn't . . ." She was looking down now, motionless save for her hands, with the heel of one of which she was striking lightly the other's palm. Her voice was flat, hard, and low, not carrying three feet:

"We. We. He has boarded and lodged us for a day and night now, and now he is even going to get us another ship to fly. And all I want is just a house, a room; a cabin will do, a coal-shed where I can know that next Monday and the Monday after that and the Monday after that. . . . Do you suppose he would have something like that he could give to me?" She turned; she said, "We better get on and get that stuff for Jack's leg." The reporter had not heard her, he had not been listening; now he found that he had not even been watching; his first intimation was when he saw her walking towards him. "We're going on to your house," she said. "I guess we'll see you and Roger when we see you. You have changed your plan about leaving town, I imagine?"

"Yes," the reporter said. "I mean no. I'm going home with a guy on the paper to sleep. Don't you bother about me." He looked at her, his face gaunt, serene, peaceful. "Don't you worry. I'll be O.K."

"Yes," she said. "About that money. That was the truth. You can ask Roger and Jack."

"It's all right," he said. "I would believe you even if I knew you had lied."

And To-morrow

"So you see how it is," the reporter said. He looked down at Ord too, as he seemed doomed to look down at everyone with whom he seemed perennially and perpetually compelled either to plead or just to endure: perhaps enduring and passing the time until that day when time and age would have thinned still more what blood he had and so permit him to see himself actually as the friendly and lonely ghost peering timidly down from the hayloft at the other children playing below. "The valves went bad and then he and Holmes had to go to that meeting so they could tell them that thirty per cent. exceeded the code or something: and then Jiggs went and then they didn't have time to check the valve stems and take out the bad ones and then the whole engine went and the rudder post and a couple of longerons and to-morrow's the last day. That's tough luck, ain't it?"

"Yes," Ord said. They all three still stood. Ord had probably invited them to sit out of habit, courtesy, when they first came in, though probably he did not remember now doing so any more than the reporter and Shumann could remember declining if they had declined. But probably neither invitation nor refusal had passed at all. The reporter had brought with him into the house, the room, that atmosphere of a fifteenth-century Florentine stage scene—an evening call with formal courteous words in the mouth and naked rapiers under the cloaks. In the impregnably new glow of two rose-shaded lamps which looked like the ones that burn for three hours each night in a living-room suite in the store windows dressed by a junior man clerk, they all stood now, as they had come from the airport, the reporter in that single suit which apparently composed his wardrobe, and Shumann and Ord in grease-stained suède jackets which a third person could not have told apart, standing in the living-room of

Ord's new, neat, little flower-cluttered house built with the compact economy of an aeroplane itself, with the new matched divan and chairs and tables and lamps arranged about it with the myriad compactness of the dials and knobs of an instrument panel. From somewhere towards the rear they could hear a dinner-table being set, and a woman's voice singing obviously to a small child. "All right," Ord said. He did not move; his eyes seemed to watch them both without looking at either, as though they actually were armed invaders. "What do you want me to do?"

"Listen," the reporter said. "It's not the money, the prize; I don't have to tell you that. You were one too, not so long ago, before you met Atkinson and got a break. Hell, look at you now, even when you got Atkinson and all you have to do is just build them without even seeing a pylon closer to it than the grand-stand, without ever taking your other foot off the ground except to get into bed. But do you? Yair; maybe it was somebody else pulling that Ninety-Two around those pylons at Chicago last summer that day; maybe that wasn't Matt Ord at all. So you know it ain't the money, the damn cash: Jesus Christ, he ain't got the jack he won yesterday yet. Because if it was just the money, if he just had to have it and he come to you and told you, you would lend it to him. Yair, I know. I don't have to tell you. Jesus, I don't have to tell anybody that after to-day, after up there in that office at noon. Yair; listen. Suppose instead of them up there on those damn hard chairs to-day it had been a gang of men hired to go down into a mine say, not to do anything special down there but just to see if the mine would cave in on top of them, and five minutes before they went down the big-bellied guys that own the mine would tell them that everybody's pay had been cut two and a half per cent. to print a notice how the elevator or something had fell on one of them the night before: would they go down? Naw. But did these guys refuse to fly that race? Maybe it was not a valve that Shumann's ship swallowed but a peanut somebody in the grand-stand threw down on the apron. Yair; they could have kept back the ninety-seven and a half and give them the two and a half and it would——"

"No," Ord said. He spoke with complete and utter finality. "I wouldn't even let Shumann make a field hop in it. I wouldn't let any man, let alone fly it around a closed course. Even if it was qualified." Now it was as though with a word Ord had cut through the circumlocution like through a light net and that the reporter, without breaking stride, had followed him on to new ground as bleak and forthright as a prize-ring.

"But you have flown it. I don't mean that Shumann can fly as good as you can; I don't believe anybody can do that even though I know mine ain't even an opinion: it's just that hour's dual you give me talking. But Shumann can fly anything that will fly. I believe that. And we will get it qualified; the licence is still O.K."

"Yes. The licence is O.K. But the reason it hasn't been revoked yet is the Department knows I ain't going to let it off the ground again. Only to revoke it would not be enough: it ought to be broken up and then burned, like you would kill a mad dog. Hell, no. I won't do it. I feel sorry for Shumann, but not as sorry as I would feel to-morrow night if that ship was over at Feinman Airport to-morrow afternoon."

"But listen, Matt," the reporter said. Then he stopped. He did not speak loudly, and with no especial urgency, but he emanated the illusion still of having long since collapsed yet being still intact in his own weightlessness like a dandelion burr moving where there is no wind. In the soft pink glow his face appeared gaunter than ever, as though following the excess of the past night, his vital spark now fed on the inner side of the actual skin itself, paring it steadily thinner and more and more transparent, as parchment is made. Now his face was completely inscrutable. "So even if we could get it qualified, you wouldn't let Shumann fly it."

"Right," Ord said. "It's tough on him. I know that. But he don't want to commit suicide."

"Yair," the reporter said. "He ain't quite got to where won't nothing else content him. Well, I guess we better get on back to town."

"Stay and eat some dinner," Ord said. "I told Mrs. Ord you fellows——"

"I reckon we better get on back," the reporter said. "It looks like we will have all day to-morrow with nothing to do but eat."

"We could eat and then drive over to the hangar and I will show you the ship and try to explain——"

"Yair," the reporter said pleasantly. "But what we want is one that Shumann can look at from inside the cockpit three o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Well, sorry we troubled you." The station was not far; they followed a quiet gravelled village street in the darkness, the Franciana February darkness already heavy with spring—the Franciana spring which emerges out of the Indian summer of fall almost, like a mistimed stage resurrection which takes the curtain even before rigor mortis has made its bow, where the decade's phenomenon of ice occurs simultaneous with bloomed stalk and budded leaf. They walked quietly; even the reporter was not talking now—the two of them who could have had nothing in common save the silence which for the moment the reporter permitted them—the one volatile, irrational, with his ghost-like quality of being beyond all mere restrictions of flesh and time; the other single-purposed, fatally and grimly without any trace of introversion or any ability to objectivate or ratiocinate, as though like the engine, the machine for which he apparently existed, he functioned, moved, only in the vapour of gasoline and the film slick of oil—the two of them taken in conjunction and because of this dissimilarity capable of almost anything. Walking, they seemed to communicate by some means or agency the purpose, the disaster, towards which, without yet being conscious of it apparently, they moved. "Well," the reporter said. "That's about what we expected."

"Yair," Shumann said. They walked on in silence again; it was as though the silence were the dialogue and the actual speech the soliloquy, the marshalling of thought:

"Are you afraid of it?" the reporter said. "Let's get that settled; we can do that right now."

"Tell me about it again," Shumann said.

"Yes. The guy brought it down here from Saint Louis for Matt to rebuild it; it wouldn't go fast enough for him. He had it all doped out, about how they would pull the engine and change the body a little and put in a big engine and Matt told him he didn't think that was so good, that the ship had all the engine then it had any business with and the guy asked Matt whose ship it was and Matt said it was the guy's and the guy asked Matt whose money it was and so Matt said O.K. Only Matt thought they ought to change the body more than the guy thought they ought to and at last Matt refused to have anything to do with it unless the guy compromised with him and even then Matt didn't think so much of it, he didn't want to butcher it up because it was a good ship, even I can tell that by looking at it. And so they compromised because Matt told him he would not test it otherwise, besides getting the licence back on it and the guy saying how he seemed to have been misinformed in what he had heard about Matt and so Matt told him O.K., if he wanted to take the ship to somebody else he would put it back together and not even charge the guy storage space on it. So finally the guy agreed to let Matt make the changes he absolutely insisted on and then he wanted Matt to guarantee the ship and Matt told the guy his guarantee would be when Matt got into the cockpit and took it off and the guy said he meant to turn a pylon with it and Matt told the guy maybe he had been misinformed about him and maybe he had better take the ship to somebody else and so the guy cooled down and Matt made the changes and put in the big engine and he brought Sales, the inspector, out there and they stressed it and Sales O.K.'d the job and then Matt told the guy he was ready to test it. The guy had been kind of quiet for some time now, he said O.K., he would go into town and get the money while Matt was testing it, flying it in, and so Matt took it off."

They didn't stop walking, the reporter talking quietly: "Because I don't know much; I just had an hour's dual with Matt because he gave it to me one day: I don't know why he did it and I reckon he don't either. So I don't know: only what I

could understand about what Matt said, that it flew O.K. because Sales passed it. It flew O.K. and it stalled O.K. and did everything it was supposed to do up in the air, because Matt wasn't even expecting it when it happened: he was coming in to land, he said how he was getting the stick back and the ship coming in fine and then all of a sudden his belt caught him and he saw the ground up in front of his nose instead of down under it where it ought to been, and how he never took time to think, he just jammed the stick forward like he was trying to dive it into the ground and sure enough the nose came up just in time; he said the slip stream on the tail group made a—a——"

"Burble," Shumann said.

"Yair. Burble. He don't know if it was going slow to land, or being close to the ground, that changed the slip-stream, he just levelled it off with the stick jammed against the fire wall until it lost speed and the burble went away and he got the stick back and blasted the nose up with the gun and he managed to stay inside the field by ground-looping it. And so they waited awhile for the guy to get back from town with the money and after awhile Matt put the ship back in the hangar and it's still there. So you say now if you think you better not."

"Yair," Shumann said. "Maybe it's weight distribution."

"Yair. That may be it. Maybe we will find out right away it's just that, maybe as soon as you see the ship you will know." They came to the quiet little station lighted by a single bulb, almost hidden in a mass of oleander and vines and palmettos. In either direction the steady green eye of a switch-lamp gleamed faintly on the rails where they ran, sparsely strung with the lighted windows of houses, through a dark canyon of moss-hung live oaks. To the south, on the low night overcast, lay the glare of the city itself. They had about ten minutes to wait.

"Where you going to sleep to-night?" Shumann said.

"I got to go to the office for awhile. I'll go home with one of the guys there."

"You better come on home. You got enough rugs and things for us all to sleep. It wouldn't be the first time Jiggs and Jack and me have slept on the floor."

"Yes," the reporter said. He looked down at the other; they were little better than blurs to one another; the reporter said in a tone of hushed quiet amazement: "You see, it don't matter where I would be. I could be ten miles away or just on the other side of that curtain, and it would be the same. Jesus, it's funny: Holmes is the one that ain't married to her and if I said anything like that to him I would have to dodge—if I had time. And you are married to her, and I can. . . . Yair. You can go on and hit me too. Because maybe if I was to even sleep with her, it would be the same. Sometimes I think about how it's you and him and how maybe sometimes she don't even know the difference, one from another, and I would think how maybe if it was me too she wouldn't even know I was there at all."

"Here, for Christ's sake," Shumann said. "You'll have me thinking you are ribbing me up in this crate of Ord's so you can marry her maybe."

"Yair," the reporter said; "all right. I'd be the one. Yair. Because listen. I don't want anything. Maybe it's because I just want what I am going to get, only I don't think it's just that. Yair, I'd just be the name, my name, you see; the house and the beds and what we would need to eat. Because, Jesus, I'd just be walking: it would still be the same: you and him and I'd just be walking, on the ground; I would maybe keep up with Jiggs and that's all. Because it's thinking about the day after to-morrow and the day after that and after that and me smelling the same burnt coffee and dead shrimp and oysters and waiting for the same light to change, like me and the red light worked on the same clock so I could cross and get home and go to bed so I could get up and start smelling the coffee and fish and waiting for the light to change again; yair, smelling the paper and the ink too where it says how among those who beat or got beat at Omaha or Miami or Cleveland or Los Angeles was Roger Shumann and family. Yes. I would be the name; I could anyway buy her the pants and the nightgowns and it would be my sheets on the bed and even my towels. . . . Well, come on. Ain't you going to sock me?" Now the far end of the canyon of live oaks

sprang into more profound impenetrability yet as the headlight of the train fell upon it and then swept down the canyon itself. Now Schumann could see the other's face.

"Does this guy you are going to stay with to-night expect you?" he said.

"Yes. I'll be all right. And listen. We better catch the eight-twenty back here."

"All right," Shumann said. "Listen. About that money——"

"It's all right," the reporter said. "It was all there."

"We put a five and a one back into your pocket. But if it was gone, I'll make it good Saturday, along with the other. It was our fault for leaving it there. But we couldn't get in; the door had locked when it shut."

"It don't matter," the reporter said. "It's just money. It don't matter if you don't ever pay it back." The train came up, slowing, the lighted windows jarred to a halt. The car was full, since it was not yet eight o'clock, but they found two seats at last, in tandem, so they could not talk any more until they got out in the station. The reporter still had a dollar of the borrowed five; they took a cab. "We'll go by the paper first," he said. "Jiggs ought to be almost sober now." The cab, even at the station, ran at once into confetti, emerging beneath dingy gouts of the purple-and-goldbunting three days old now dropped across the smoke-grimed façade of the station like flotsam left by a spent and falling tide and murmuring even yet of the chalk-white, the forlorn, the glare and pulse of Grandlieu Street miles away. Now the cab began to run between loops of it stretched from lamp-post to lamp-post; then it ran between the lofty and urbane palms and turned slowing and then drew up at the twin glass doors. "I won't be but a minute," the reporter said. "You can stay here in the cab."

"We can walk from here," Shumann said. "The police station ain't far."

"We'll need the cab to get around Grandlieu," the reporter said. "I won't be long." He walked into no reflection now, since darkness was behind him; the doors swung too. The elevator door was slightly ajar and he could see the stack of papers

beneath the face-down watch and he could smell the stinking pipe but he did not pause, taking the steps two at a time, and on into the city room. Beneath his green eyeshade Hagood looked up and saw the reporter. But this time the reporter neither sat down nor removed his hat: he stood, loomed, into the green diffusion above the desk-lamp, looking down at Hagood with gaunt and quiet immobility as though he had been blown for a second against the desk by a wind and would in another second be blown onward once more.

"Go home and go to bed," Hagood said. "The story you phoned in is already set up."

"Yes," the reporter said. "I must have fifty dollars, chief." After awhile Hagood said:

"Must, do you?" He did not move at all. "Must, eh?" he said. The reporter did not move either.

"I can't help it. I know that I . . . yesterday, whenever it was. When I thought I was fired. I got the message, all right. I ran into Cooper about noon and I didn't call you until after three. And I didn't report in here, like I said. But I did phone in the story; I will come back in about an hour and clean it. . . . But I got to have fifty dollars."

"It's because you know I won't fire you," Hagood said. "Is that it?" The reporter said nothing. "All right. Come on. What is it this time? I know, all right. But I want to hear it from you—or are you still married or moved away or dead?" The reporter did not move; he spoke quietly, apparently into the green lamp-shade as if it was a microphone:

"The cops got him. It happened just about the time Shumann nosed over, and so I . . . So he's in the can. And they will need some jack too until Shumann gets his money to-morrow night."

"So," Hagood said. He looked up at the still face above him which for the time had that calm sightless contemplation of a statue. "Why don't you let these people alone?" he said. Now the blank eyes waked; the reporter looked at Hagood for a full minute. His voice was as quiet as Hagood's.

"I can't," he said.

"You can't?" Hagood said. "Did you ever try to?"

"Yes," the reporter said in his dead flat voice, looking at the lamp again; that is, Hagood knew that the reporter was not looking at him. "I tried." After a moment Hagood turned, heavily. His coat hung on the back of his chair. He took his wallet from it and counted fifty dollars on to the desk and pushed it over to the reporter and saw the bony, clawlike hand come into the lamp's glare and take up the money. "Do you want me to sign anything now?" the reporter said.

"No," Hagood said without looking up. "Go home and go to bed. That's all I want."

"I'll come in later and clean up the story."

"It's already in galley," Hagood said. "You go home." The reporter moved away from the desk quietly enough, but as he entered the corridor it was as though the wind which had blown him against Hagood's desk and left him there had now begun to blow him again. He was passing the elevator shaft towards the stairs with only a glance at it when the door clashed back and someone got out, whereupon he turned and entered, reaching with one hand into his pocket as with the other he lifted the top paper beneath the sliding face-down watch. But he did not even glance at it now; he thrust it, folded, into his pocket as the cage stopped and the door clashed open.

"Well, I see where another of them tried to make a headline out of himself this afternoon," the elevator man said.

"Is that so?" the reporter said. "Better close that door; I think you got a draught in there." He ran into the swinging reflection in the glass doors this time, on his long loose legs, with the long loose body which had had no food since noon and little enough before that but which, weightless anyway, had the less to carry now. Shumann opened the cab door for him. "Bayou Street police station," the reporter told the driver. "Make it snappy."

"We could walk," Shumann said.

"Hell, I got fifty bucks now," the reporter said. They travelled cross town now; the cab could rush fast down each block of the continuous alley, pausing only at the intersections where, to

the right, canyon niched, the rumour of Grandlieu Street swelled and then faded in repetitive and indistinguishable turmoil, flicking on and past as though the cab ran along the rimless periphery of a ghostly wheel spoked with light and sound. "Yair," the reporter said, "I reckon they took Jiggs to the only quiet place in New Valois for a man to sober up in. He'll be sober now." He was sober; a turnkey fetched him in to where the reporter and Shumann waited at the desk. His eye was closed now and his lip swollen, though the blood had been cleaned away except where it had dried on his shirt.

"Got enough for awhile?" Shumann said.

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Give me a cigarette, for God's sake." The reporter gave him the cigarette and held the match while Jiggs tried to bring the cigarette into the flame, jerking and twitching until at last the reporter grasped Jiggs' hand and steadied it to make the contact.

"We'll get a piece of steak and put it on your eye," the reporter said.

"You better put it inside of him," the desk man said.

"How about that?" the reporter said. "You want to eat?" Jiggs held the cigarette in both shaking hands.

"All right," Jiggs said.

"What?" the reporter said. "Would you feel better if you ate something?"

"All right," Jiggs said. "Do we go now or do I go back in there?"

"No, we're going right now," the reporter said. He said to Shumann, "You take him on to the cab; I'll be right out." He turned to the desk. "What's it, Mac? Drunk or vag?"

"You springing him, or the paper?"

"I am."

"Call it vag," the desk man said. The reporter took out Hagood's money and laid ten dollars on the desk.

"O.K.," he said. "Will you give the other five to Leblanc? I borrowed it off of him out at the airport this afternoon." He went out too. Shumann and Jiggs waited beside the cab. The reporter saw now the once raked and swaggering cap crumpled

and thrust into Jiggs' hip pocket and that the absence of the raked and filthy object from Jiggs' silhouette was like the dropped flag from the shot buck's—the body still ran, still retained a similitude of power and even speed, would even run on for yards and even perhaps miles, and then for years in a gnawing burrowing of worms, but that which tasted air and drank the sun was dead. "The poor bastard," the reporter thought; he still carried the mass of bills as he had thrust them into and withdrawn them from his pocket. "You're O.K. now," he said, loudly, heartily. "Roger can stop somewhere and get you something to eat and then you will be all right. Here." He nudged his hand at Shumann.

"I won't need it," Shumann said. "Jack collected his eighteen-fifty for the jump this afternoon."

"Yair; I forgot," the reporter said. Then he said, "But what about to-morrow? We'll be gone all day, see? Here, take it; you can leave it with her in case. . . . You can just keep it and pay it all back, then."

"Yair," Shumann said. "Thanks then." He took the crumpled wad without looking at it and put it into his pocket and pushed Jiggs into the cab.

"Besides, you can pay the cab, too," the reporter said. "We forgot about that. . . . I told him where to go. See you in the morning." He leaned to the window; beyond Shumann, Jiggs sat in the other corner, smoking the cigarette out of both shaking hands. The reporter spoke in a tone repressed, conspiratorial: "Train leaves at eight-twenty-two. O.K.?"

"O.K.," Shumann said.

"I'll have everything fixed up and meet you at the station."

"O.K.," Shumann said. The cab moved on. Through the back window Shumann saw the reporter standing at the kerb in the glare of the two unmistakable pariah-green globes on either side of the entrance, still, gaunt, the garments which hung from the skeleton frame seeming to stir faintly and steadily even when and where there was no wind. As though having chosen that one spot out of the entire sprawled and myriad city he stood there without impatience or design: patron (even if no

guardian) saint of all waifs, all the homeless, the desperate and the starved. Now the cab turned its back on Grandlieu Street, though presently it turned parallel to it or to where it must be now, since now there was no rumour, no sound, save the light glare on the sky which held to their right even after the cab turned and now ran towards where the street should be. Shumann did not know they had crossed it until they plunged suddenly into the region of narrow gashes between balconies, crossing intersections marked by the ghostly one-way arrows. "We must be almost there," he said. "You want to stop and eat?"

"All right," Jiggs said.

"Do you or don't you?"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Whatever you want me to do." Then Shumann looked at him and saw him trying to hold the cigarette to his mouth with both hands, and that the cigarette was dead.

"What do you want?" Shumann said.

"I want a drink," Jiggs said quietly.

"Do you have to have one?"

"I guess I don't if I can't get one." Shumann watched him holding the dead cigarette to his mouth, drawing at it.

"If I give you a drink, will you eat something?"

"Yair. I'll do anything." Shumann leaned forward and tapped on the glass. The driver turned his head.

"Where can I get something to eat?" Shumann said. "A bowl of soup?"

"You'll have to go back up towards Grandlieu for that."

"Ain't there any place close around here?"

"You can get a ham sandwich at these wop stores, if you can find one open."

"All right. Stop at the next one you see, will you?" It was not far; Shumann recognized the corner, though he asked to be sure as they got out. "Noy-dees Street ain't far from here, is it?"

"Noyades?" the driver said. "That's it in the next block there. On the right."

"We'll get out here then," Shumann said. He drew out the

crumpled money which the reporter had given him, glancing down at the plump neat figure five in the corner. "That makes eleven-seventy," he thought, then he discovered a second bill crumpled into the first one; he passed it to the driver, still looking at the compact "5" on the one in his hand. "Damn," he thought, "that's seventeen dollars," as the driver spoke to him:

"It's just two-fifteen. Ain't you got anything smaller than this?"

"Smaller?" Shumann said. He looked at the bill in the driver's hand, held so that the light from the meter fell upon it. It was a ten. "No," he thought; he didn't even swear now. "It's twenty-two dollars." The store was a room the size, shape and temperature of a bank vault. It was illuminated by one kerosene lamp which seemed to cast not light but shadows, out of whose brown Rembrandt gloom the hushed bellies of ranked cans gleamed behind a counter massed with an unbelievable quantity of indistinguishable objects which the proprietor must vend by feel alone to distinguish not only object from object but object from chiaroscuro. It smelled of cheese and garlic and of heated metal; sitting on either side of a small fiercely burning kerosene heater a man and a woman, whom Shumann had not seen until now, both wrapped in shawls and distinguishable by gender only because the man wore a cap, looked up at him. The sandwich was the end of a hard French loaf, with ham and cheese. He gave it to Jiggs and followed him out, where Jiggs stopped again and stood looking at the object in his hand with a sort of ox-like despair.

"Could I have the drink first?" he said.

"You eat while we walk home," Shumann said. "I'll give you the drink later."

"It would be better if I had the drink first," Jiggs said.

"Yes," Shumann said. "You thought that this morning too."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "That's right." He became motionless again, looking at the sandwich.

"Go on," Shumann said. "Eat it."

"All right," Jiggs said. He began to eat; Shumann watched him bring the sandwich to his mouth with both hands and turn his face sideways to bite into it; he could see Jiggs shaking and jerking all over now as he worried the bite off and began to chew. Chewing, Jiggs looked full at Shumann, holding the bitten sandwich in both grimed hands before his breast as though it were a crucifix, chewing with his mouth open, looking full at Shumann until Shumann realized that Jiggs was not looking at him at all, that the one good eye was merely open and filled with a profound and hopeless abnegation as if the despair which both eyes should have divided between them had now to be concentrated and contained in one alone, and that Jiggs' face was now slicked over with something which in the faint light resembled oil in the instant before Jiggs began to vomit. Shumann held him up, holding the sandwich clear with the other hand, while Jiggs' stomach continued to go through the motions of refusal long after there was nothing left to abdicate.

"Try to stop it now," Shumann said.

"Yair," Jiggs said. He dragged his sleeve across his mouth.

"Here," Shumann said. He extended his handkerchief. Jiggs took it, but at once he reached his hand again, groping. "What?" Shumann said.

"The sandwich."

"Could you hold it down if you had a drink?"

"I could do anything if I had a drink," Jiggs said.

"Come on," Shumann said. When they entered the alley they could see the outfall of light from the window beyond the balcony as Hagood had seen it last night, though there was now no arm shadow, no voice. Shumann halted beneath the balcony. "Jack," he said. "Laverne." But still there was nothing to see: just the parachute jumper's voice from beyond the window:

"It's off the latch. Lock it when you come in." When they came up the stairs the jumper was sitting on the cot, in his underclothes, his clothing arranged neatly on a chair and his foot on the chair too while with a stained wad of cotton he swabbed liquid from a bottle into the long raw abrasion like a

paint smear from his ankle to his thigh. On the floor lay the bandage and tape which he had worn in from the airport. He had already arranged the cot for the night; the blanket was turned neatly back and the rug from the floor spread over the foot.

"You better sleep in the bed to-night," Shumann said. "That blanket will give that skinned place hell." The jumper did not answer, bent over his leg, swabbing the medicine in with a sort of savage concentration. Shumann turned; he seemed to notice for the first time the sandwich in his hand and then to remember Jiggs who now stood quietly beside his canvas bag, watching Shumann quietly and patiently with the one eye, with that patient inarticulate quality of a dog. "Oh yes," Shumann said, turning on towards the table. The jug still sat there, though the glasses and the dish-pan were gone and the jug itself appeared to have been washed. "Get a glass and some water," he said. When the curtain fell behind Jiggs, Shumann laid the sandwich on the table and looked at the jumper again. After a moment the jumper looked up at him.

"Well?" the jumper said. "What about it?"

"I guess I can get it," Shumann said.

"You mean you didn't see Ord?"

"Yair. We found him."

"Suppose you do get it. How are you going to get it qualified in time to race to-morrow?"

"I don't know," Shumann said. He lit a cigarette. "He said he could get that fixed up. I don't know, myself."

"How? Does the race committee think he is Jesus too, the same as the rest of you do?"

"I said I don't know," Shumann said. "If we can't get it qualified, that's all there is to it. But if we can . . ." He smoked. The jumper swabbed carefully and viciously at his leg. "There's two things I could do," Shumann said. "It will qualify under five hundred and seventy-five cubic inches. I could enter it in that and loaf back on half throttle and take third without having to make a vertical turn, and the purse to-morrow is eight-ninety. Or I could enter the other, the Trophy. It will be the

only thing out there that will even stay in sight of Ord. And Ord is just in it so his home folks can see him fly; I don't believe he would beat that Ninety-Two to death just to win two thousand dollars. Not on a five-mile course. Because it must be fast. We would be fixed then."

"Yes; fixed. We'd owe Ord about five thousand for the crate and the motor. What's wrong with it?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask Ord. All I know is what Ord told him"—he made a brief indescribable motion with his head as though to indicate the room but which indicated the reporter as plainly as if Shumann had spoken his name—" he said the controls cross when it lands. Whether it's slowing up or whether it's the air off the ground. Because he said that Ord stalled it out when he . . . Or maybe a different weight distribution, a couple of sandbags in the——"

"Yair. Or maybe when he gets it qualified to-morrow he will have them move the pylons up to around four thousand feet and hold the race up there instead of at General Behindman's country club." He ceased and bent over his leg again, then Shumann also saw Jiggs. He had apparently been in the room for some time, standing beside the table with two of the jam glasses, one of them containing water, in his hands. Shumann went to the table and poured into the empty glass and looked at Jiggs who now mused upon the drink.

"Ain't that enough?" Shumann said.

"Yair," Jiggs said, rousing; "yair." When he poured water from the other glass into the drink the two rims clicked together with a faint chattering. Shumann watched him set the water glass down, where it chattered again on the table before he released it, and then with both hands attempt to raise the other one to his lips. As the glass approached Jiggs' whole head began to jerk so that he could not make contact with his mouth, the rim of the glass clicking against his teeth while he tried to still it. "Jesus," he said quietly, "Jesus. I tried for two hours to sit on the bed because when I would walk up and down the guy would come and hollar at me through the bars."

"Here," Shumann said. He put his hand on the glass and

stopped it and tilted it; he could watch Jiggs swallowing now and the liquid trickling down his blue-stubbled chin from each corner of his mouth and splotching dark on his shirt until Jiggs pushed the glass away, panting.

"Wait," he said. "It's wasting. Maybe if you won't look at me I can drink it."

"And then get on the sandwich again," Shumann said. He took the jug from the table and looked back at the jumper again. "Go on and take the bed to-night," he said. "You'll have that leg infected under a blanket. Are you going to put the bandage back on?"

"I'll sleep in a cuckold's bed but not in a pimp's," the jumper said. "Go on. Get yourself a piece to take to hell with you to-morrow."

"I can take third in the five-seventy-five without even crossing the airport," Shumann said. "Anyway, by the time it is qualified I'll know whether I can land it or not. . . . How about putting that bandage back on?" But the jumper did not answer or even look at him. The blanket was already turned back; with the injured leg swinging stiffly he turned on the ball of his buttocks and swung into the cot and drew the blanket up in one motion. For awhile longer Shumann looked at him, the jug against his leg. Then he realized that for some time he had been hearing Jiggs chewing and he looked at him and saw Jiggs squatting on the floor beside the canvas bag, chewing, holding the sandwich in both hands. "You, too," Shumann said. "You going to sleep there?" Jiggs looked up at him with the one eye. His whole face was swollen and puffed now; he chewed slowly and gingerly, looking up at Shumann with that dog-like quality, abject, sad, and at peace. "Go on," Shumann said. "Get settled. I'm going to turn out the light." Without ceasing to chew Jiggs disengaged one hand and dragged the canvas sack over and lay down, his head upon it. Shumann could still hear him chewing as he groped in the darkness towards the curtain and lifted it and passed beyond it. Groping on to the lamp beside the bed, moving quietly now, he snapped it on and found the woman, the boy asleep beside her, watching him. She lay in the middle

of the bed with the boy between her and the wall. Her clothes were laid neatly too on a chair and then Shumann saw the nightgown, the only silk one she had, lying across the chair too. Stooping to set the jug beneath the bed he paused and then lifted from the floor the cotton shorts which she wore, or had worn, from where they had either been dropped or flung, and put them on the chair too. He removed his jacket and began to unbutton his shirt while she watched him, the bedclothes huddled to her chin.

"So you got the ship," she said.

"I don't know. We're going to try." He removed the watch from his wrist and wound it carefully and put it on the table; when the faint clicking ceased he could hear again from beyond the curtain the sound of Jiggs chewing. He set his feet in turn on the corner of the chair and unlaced his shoes, feeling her watching him. "I can take at least third in the five-seventy-five without passing the pylons close enough for anybody on them to read the ship's number. And that's fifteen per cent. of eight-ninety. Or there's two thousand in the Trophy and I don't believe Ord will——"

"Yes. I heard you through the curtain. But why?" He set the shoes neatly side by side and stepping out of his trousers shook them into crease by the cuffs, folded them, and put them on the chest of drawers beside the celluloid comb and brush and the cravat, and stood in shorts. "And the ship is all right except you won't know until you are in the air whether or not you can take it off and you won't know until you are back on the ground and standing up again whether or not you can land it."

"I guess I can land it, all right." He lit a cigarette and then stood with his hand on the light-switch, looking at her. She had not moved, lying with the covers drawn smooth and nun-like up to her chin. Again from beyond the curtain he could hear Jiggs chewing, mouthing at the hard sandwich with that painful patience.

"You're lying," she said. "We got along before."

"Because we had to. This time we don't have to."

"But it's seven months yet."

"Yair. Just seven months. And one more meet, and the only ship we have with a shot engine and two wrenched longerons." He looked at her a moment longer; at last she opened the covers; as he snapped off the light his retina carried into the darkness the imprint of one bare shoulder and breast down to the waist. "Want to move Jack to the middle?" he said. She did not answer, though it was not until he drew the covers up himself that he discovered that she was lying rigid, her flank tense and hard with rigid muscles, where his own touched it as he settled himself. He withdrew the cigarette and held it suspended above his mouth, hearing Jiggs chewing beyond the curtain and then the jumper's voice: "Jesus God, stop eating that! You sound just like a dog!"

"Here, take it easy," Shumann said. "I haven't even got it qualified yet."

"You bastard," she said in a tense rigid whisper. "You rotten pilot, you bastard rotten pilot. Hanging off there with a dead stick so you wouldn't interfere in their damn race and then mushing in over that sea-wall and you wouldn't even hold its head up! you wouldn't even hold——" Her hand shot out and snatched the cigarette from him; he felt his own fingers wrench and bend and then saw the red coal twinkle and arc across the dark and strike the invisible floor.

"Here," he whispered. "Let me pick it up off the . . ." But now the hard hand struck his cheek, clutching and scrabbling about his jaw and throat and shoulder until he caught it and held it, wrenching and jerking.

"You bastard rotten, you rotten——" she panted.

"All right," he said. "Steady, now." She ceased, breathing hard and fast. But he still held the wrist, wary and without gentleness too. "All right, now. . . . You want to take your pants off?"

"They're already off."

"Oh yair," he said. "I forgot."

When she made her first parachute jump they had not been together very long. She was the one who suggested that he teach her to jump, and he already had a parachute, the exhibition

kind; when he used it he either flew the aeroplane or made the jump, depending on whether the casual partner with whom he would join forces for a day or a week or a season were a pilot himself or not. She made the suggestion herself and he showed her, drilled her in the simple mechanics of climbing out on to the wing with the parachute harness buckled on and then dropping off and letting her own weight pull the parachute from the case attached to the wing.

The act was billed for a Saturday afternoon in a small Kansas town and he did not know that she was frightened until they were in the air, the money collected and the crowd waiting, and she had begun to climb out along the wing. She wore skirts; they had decided that her exposed legs would not only be a drawing card but that in the skirt no one would doubt that she was a woman; and now she was clinging to the inner bay strut and looking back at him with an expression that he was later to realize was not at all fear of death but on the contrary a wild and now mindless repudiation of bereavement as if it were he who was the one about to die and not her. He sat in the back cockpit with the aeroplane in position, holding the wing up under her weight, gesturing her on out towards the wing-tip, almost angrily, when he saw her leave the strut and with that blind and completely irrational expression of protest and wild denial on her face, the hem of the skirt, whipping out of the parachute harness about her loins, climb, not back into the front seat which she had left but on towards the one in which he sat holding the aeroplane level, scrambling and sprawling into the cock-pit (he saw her knuckles perfectly white where she gripped the cockpit's edge) and then facing him.

She told him later that she had not planned or thought at all until she looked back at him from the strut and realized that she might have to die before she touched him again. So he tried to fight her off for awhile but he had to fly the aeroplane, keep it in position over the field. It was some blind instinct that made him remember to roll the aeroplane towards the wing to which the parachute-case was attached because the next that he remembered was the belt catching him across the legs as,

looking out, he saw the parachute floating between him and the ground.

He had to land the aeroplane, the rest he learned later: how she had come down, with the dress, pulled or blown free of the parachute harness, up about her armpits, and had been dragged along the ground until overtaken by a yelling mob of men and youths, in the centre of which she now lay dressed from the waist down in dirt and parachute straps and stockings. When he fought through the mob to where she was she had been arrested by three village officers one of whose faces Shumann remarked even then with a violent foreboding—a youngish man with a hard handsome face sadistic rather than vicious, who was using the butt of a pistol to keep the mob back and who struck at Shumann with it with the same blind fury. They carried her to jail, the younger one threatening her with the pistol now; already Shumann realized that in the two other officers he had only bigotry and greed to contend with. It was the younger one that he had to fear—a man besotted and satiated by his triumphs over abased human flesh which his corrupt and picayune office supplied him, seeing now and without forewarning the ultimate shape of his jaded desires fall upon him out of the sky, not merely naked but clothed in the very traditional symbology—the ruined dress with which she was trying wildly to cover her loins, and the parachute harness—of female bondage.

They would neither arrest Shumann too nor allow him access to her. After he was driven back along with the mob from the jail door by the younger officer's pistol—it was a square building of fierce new brick into which he saw her forced, struggling still—he had a single glimpse of her indomitable and terrified face beyond the younger officer's shoulder as the now alarmed older officers hurried her inside. For the time he became one of the mob, though even then, mad with rage and terror, he knew that it was merely because his and the mob's immediate object happened to be the same, to see, touch her, again. He knew too that the two older craven officers were at least neutral, pulled to his side by their own physical fear of the mob, and that actually the one had for support only his dispensation for

impunitive violence with which the dingy cadaver of the law invested him. But it seemed to be enough. It was for the next hour anyway, during which, followed by his ragamuffin train of boys and youths and drunken men, Shumann accomplished his nightmare's orbit about the town, from mayor to lawyer to lawyer to lawyer and back again. They were at supper, or about to sit down to it or just finishing; he would have to tell his story with the round eyes of children and the grim implacable faces of wives and aunts watching him while the empowered men from whom he sought what he sincerely believed to be justice and no more forced him step by step to name what he feared, whereupon one of them threatened to have him arrested for criminal insinuations against the town's civil structure.

It was a minister (and two hours after dark) who finally telephoned to the mayor. Shumann learned only from the overheard conversation that the authorities were apparently seeking him now. Five minutes later a car called for him, with one of the two older officers in it and two others whom he had not seen before. "Am I under arrest too?" he said.

"You can try to get out and run if you want to," the officer said. That was all. The car stopped at the jail and the officer and one of the others got out. "Hold him," the officer said.

"I'll hold him all right," the second deputy said. So Shumann sat in the car with the deputy's shoulder jammed into his and watched the two others hurry up the bricked walk. The door of the jail opened for them and closed; then it opened again and he saw her. She wore a rain-coat now; he saw her for an instant as the two men hurried her out and the door closed again. It was not until the next day that she showed him the dress now in shreds and the scratches and bruises on the insides of her legs and on her jaw and face and the cut in her lip. They thrust her into the car, beside him. The officer was about to follow when the second deputy shoved him roughly away. "Ride in front," the deputy said. "I'll ride back here." There were now four in the back seat; Shumann sat rigid with the first deputy's shoulder jammed into his and Laverne's rigid flank and side jammed against him so that it seemed to him that he could feel through her rigidity

the second deputy crowding and dragging his flank against Laverne's other side.

"All right," the officer said. "Let's get away from here while we can."

"Where are we going?" Shumann asked. The officer did not answer. He leaned out, looking back at the jail as the car gathered speed, going fast now.

"Go on," he said. "Them boys may not be able to hold him and there's been too much whore's hell here already." The car rushed on, out of the village; Shumann realized that they were going in the direction of the field, the airport. The car swung in from the road; its headlights fell upon the aeroplane standing as he had jumped out of it, already running, in the afternoon. As the car stopped the lights of a second one came into sight, coming fast down the road. The officer began to curse. "Durn him. Durn them boys. I knew they couldn't——" He turned to Shumann. "There's your airship. You and her get out of here."

"What do you want us to do?" Shumann said.

"You're going to crank up that flying machine and get out of this town. And you do it quick; I was afraid them boys couldn't hold him."

"To-night?" Shumann said. "I haven't got any lights."

"Ain't nothing going to run into you up there, I guess," the officer said. "You get her into it and get away from here and don't you never come back." Now the second car slewed from the road, the lights swung full upon them; it rushed up, slewing again, with men already jumping out of it before it had stopped. "Hurry!" the officer cried. "We'll try to hold him."

"Get into the ship," Shumann told her. At first he thought that the man was drunk. He watched Laverne, holding the raincoat about her, run down the long tunnel of the cars' lights and climb into the aeroplane and vanish, then he turned and saw the man struggling while the others held him. But he was not drunk, he was mad, he was insane for the time; he struggled towards Shumann who saw in his face not rage, not even lust, but almost a counterpart of that terror and wild protest against

bereavement and division which he had seen in Laverne's face while she clung to the strut and looked back at him.

"I'll pay you!" the man screamed. "I'll pay her! I'll pay either of you! Name it! Let me . . . her once and you can cut me if you want!"

"Go on, I tell you!" the older officer panted at him. Shumann ran too; for an instant the man ceased to struggle; perhaps for the instant he believed that Shumann had gone to fetch her back. Then he began to struggle and scream again, cursing now, screaming at Laverne, calling her whore and bitch and pervert in a tone wild with despair until the engine blotted it. But Shumann could still see him struggling with the men who held him, the group silhouetted by the lights of the two cars, while he sat and warmed the engine as long as he dared. But he had to take it off cold after all; he could hear the shouts now and against the headlights he saw the man running towards him, towards the aeroplane; he took it off from where it stood, with nothing to see ahead but the blue flames at the exhaust ports, into a night without moon. Thirty minutes later, using a dimly seen windmill to check his altitude and making a fast blind landing in an alfalfa field, he struck an object which the next morning, fifty feet from the overturned aeroplane, he found to be a cow.

It was now about nine-thirty. The reporter thought for a moment of walking on over to Grandlieu Street and its celluloid- and confetti-rained uproar and down it to Saint Jules and so back to the paper that way, but he did not. When he moved it was to turn back into the dark cross street out of which the cab had emerged a half-hour before. When the reporter entered the twin glass doors and the elevator cage clashed behind him this time, stooping to lift the face-down watch alone and look at it, he would contemplate the inexplicable and fading fury of the past twenty-four hours circled back to itself and become whole and intact and objective and already vanishing slowly like the damp print of a lifted glass on a bar. Because he was not thinking about time, about any angle of clock-hands on a dial since the one moment out of all the future which he could see where his

body would need to coincide with time or dial would not occur for almost twelve hours yet. He was not even to recognize at once the cycle's neat completion towards which he walked steadily, not fast, from block to block of the narrow cross street notched out of the blunt and now slumbering back ends of commerce while at each intersection where he waited during the traffic-dammed moment there reached him, as in the cab previously, the faint rumour, the sound felt rather than heard, of Grandlieu Street: the to-night's Nile barge clatterfalque—the butterfly spawn against the choral drop of the dawn's biding white wings—and at last Saint Jules' Avenue itself running broad and suave between the austere palms springing, immobile and monstrous like burlesqued bunches of country broom sedge set on scabby posts, and then the twin doors and the elevator cage where the elevator man, glancing up at him from beneath shaggy pepper-and-salt brows that looked as if his moustache had had twins suddenly, said with grim and vindictive unction, "Well, I see how this afternoon another of them tried to make the front page, only he never quite——"

"Is that so," the reporter said pleasantly, laying the watch back. "Two past ten, huh? That's a fine hour for a man not to have nothing to do until to-morrow but go to work, ain't it?"

"That ought not to be much hardship on a man that don't only work except when he ain't got nothing else to do," the elevator man said.

"Is that so too," the reporter said pleasantly. "You better close that door; I think I felt a——" It clashed behind him. "Two minutes past ten," he thought. "That leaves . . ." But that fled before he had begun to think it; he hung in a slow long backwash of peaceful and serene waiting, thinking *Now she will be* . . . Just above the button on the bellplate the faintly oxidized streak of last night's match still showed; the match now, without calculation, without sight to guide it, almost followed the mark. The wash-room was the last door: a single opaque sheet of glass stencilled GENTLEMEN in a frame without knob ("Maybe that's why only gentlemen," the reporter

thought) in-swinging into eternal creosote. He removed even his shirt to wash, fingering gingerly the left side of his face, leaning to the blunt wavering mirror the replica of his gingerly grimace as he moved his jaw back and forth and contemplated the bluish autograph of violence like tattooing upon his diploma-coloured flesh, thinking quietly, "Yair. Now she will be . . ."

Now the city room (he scratched this match on the door itself), the barn cavern, loomed: the copy-desk like a cluttered island, the other single desks beneath the single green-shaded bulbs, had that quality of profound and lonely isolation of buoy-marked shoals in an untravelled and forgotten sea, his own among them. He had not seen it in twenty-four hours it is true, yet as he stood beside it he looked down at its cluttered surface—the edge-notching of countless vanished cigarettes, the half-filled sheet of yellow copy in the typewriter—with slow and quiet amaze as though not only at finding anything of his own on the desk but at finding the desk itself still in its old place, thinking how he could not possibly have got that drunk and got that sober in just that time. There was someone else at Hagood's desk when he passed and so Hagood had not seen him yet. He had been at his desk for almost an hour, while yellow sheet after yellow sheet passed steadily through the typewriter, when the copy-boy came.

"He wants you," the boy said.

"Thanks," the reporter said. In his shirt sleeves, and with his tie loose again though still wearing his hat, he stopped at the desk and looked down at Hagood with pleasant and courteous interrogation. "You wanted me, chief?" he said.

"I thought you went home. It's eleven o'clock. What are you doing?"

"Dolling up a Sunday feature for Smitty. He asked me to do it."

"Asked you to?"

"Yair. I had caught up. I was all through."

"What is it?"

"It's all right. It's about how the loves of Antony and Cleopatra had been prophesied all the time in Egyptian architecture

only they never knew what it meant; maybe they had to wait on the Roman papers. But it's all right. Smitty's got some books and a couple or three cuts to run, and all you have to do is try to translate the books so that any guy with a dime can understand what it means, and when you don't know yourself you just put it down like the book says it and that makes it better still because even the censors don't know what it says they were doing." But Hagood was not listening.

"You mean you are not going home to-night?" The reporter looked down at Hagood, gravely and quietly. "They are still down yonder at your place, are they?" The reporter looked at him. "What are you going to do to-night?"

"I'm going home with Smitty. Sleep on his sofa."

"He's not even here," Hagood said.

"Yair. He's at home. I told him I would finish this for him first."

"All right," Hagood said. The reporter returned to his desk.

"And now it's eleven o'clock," he thought. "And that leaves . . . *Yair. She will be . . .*" There were three or four others at the single desks, but by midnight they had snapped off their lights and gone; now there was only the group about the copy-desk and the whole building began to tremble to the remote travail of the presses. Now about the copy-desk the six or seven men, coatless and collarless, in their green eyeshades like a uniform, seemed to concentrate towards a subterranean crisis, like so many puny humans conducting the lying in of a mastodon. At half-past one Hagood himself departed; he looked across the room towards the desk where the reporter sat immobile now, his hands still on the keyboard and his lowered face shaded and so hidden by his hat-brim. It was at two o'clock that one of the proof readers approached the desk and found that the reporter was not thinking but asleep, sitting bolt upright, his bony wrists and his thin hands projecting from his frayed clean too short cuffs and lying peaceful and inert on the typewriter before him.

"We're going over to Joe's," the proof reader said. "Want to come?"

"I'm on the wagon," the reporter said. "I ain't through here, anyway."

"So I noticed," the other said. "Only you better finish it in bed. . . . What do you mean, on the wagon? That you are going to start buying your own? You can do that with us; maybe Joe won't drop dead."

"No," the reporter said. "On the wagon."

"Since when, for Christ's sake?"

"I don't know. Some time this morning.—Yair. I got to finish this. Don't you guys wait on me." So they went out, putting on their coats, though almost at once two charwomen came in. But the reporter did not heed them. He removed the sheet from the typewriter and laid it on the stack and evened them meticulously, his face peaceful. "Yair," he thought. "It ain't the money. It ain't that. . . . Yair. And now she will be . . ." The women did not pay him any mind either as he went to Hagood's desk and turned on the light above it. He chose the right drawer at once and took out the pad of blank note forms and tore off the top one and put the pad back into the drawer. He did not return to his own desk, neither did he pause at the nearest one because one of the women was busy there. So he snapped on the light above the next one and sat down and racked the note form into the typewriter and began to fill it in, carefully—the neat convenient flimsy scrap of paper which by a few marks became transposed into an implement sharper than steel and more enduring than stone and by means of which the final and fatal step became anæsthetized out of the realm not only of dread but of intelligence too, into that of delusion and mindless hope like the superscription on a love letter: . . . *February* 16, 1935 . . . *February* 16, 1936 *we* . . . *The Ord-Atkinson Aircraft Corp., Blaisedell, Franciana* . . . He did not pause at all, his fingers did not falter; he wrote in the sum exactly as though he were writing two words of a column head: *Five Thousand Dollars* ($5000.00). . . . Now he did not pause, his fingers poised, thinking swiftly while the charwoman did something in the waste-basket beside the desk in front of him, producing a mute deliberate scratching like a huge rat: "There's one of them is

against the law, only if I put in the other one it might look fishy." So he wrote again, striking the keys clean and firm, spelling out the *e-i-g-h-t per cent.* and flipping the note out. Now he went to the copy-desk itself, since he did not own a fountain pen, and turning on the light there signed the note on the first signature line, blotted it, and sat looking at it quietly for a moment, thinking, "Yair. In bed now. And now he will . . . Yair," he said aloud, quietly, "that looks O.K." He turned, speaking to either of the two women: "You all know what time it is?" One of them leaned her mop against a desk and began to draw from the front of her dress an apparently interminable length of shoe-string, though at last the watch—a heavy old-fashioned gold one made for a man to carry—came up.

"Twenty-six minutes to three," she said.

"Thanks," the reporter said. "Don't neither of you smoke cigarettes, do you?"

"Here's one I found on the floor," the second one said. "It don't look like much. It's been walked on." Nevertheless some of the tobacco remained in it, though it burned fast; at each draw the reporter received a sensation precarious and lightly temporary, as though at a breath tobacco fire and all would evacuate the paper tube and stop only when it struck the back of his throat or the end of his lungs; three draws consumed it.

"Thanks," he said. "If you find any more, will you put them on that desk back there where the coat is? Thanks.—Twenty-two to three," he thought. "That don't even leave six hours."—*Yair*, he thought, then it blew out of his mind, vanished again into the long peaceful slack not hope, not joy: just waiting, thinking how he ought to eat. Then he thought how the elevator would not be running now, so that should settle that. "Only I could get some cigarettes," he thought. "Jesus, I ought to eat something." There was no light now in the corridor, but there would be one in the wash-room. He returned to his desk, took the folded paper from his coat and went out again; and now, leaning against the carbolized wall he opened the paper upon the same box-headings, the identical from day to day—the

bankers the farmers the strikers, the foolish the unlucky and the merely criminal—distinguishable from one day to another not by what they did but by the single brief typeline beneath the paper's registered name. He could stand easily so, without apparent need to shift his weight in rotation among the members which bore it; now with mere inertia and not gravity to contend with he had even less of bulk and mass to support than he had carried running up the stairs at eight o'clock; so that he moved only when he said to himself, "It must be after three now."

He folded the paper neatly and returned to the corridor, where one glance into the dark city-room showed him that the women were done. "Yair. It's making towards four," he thought, wondering if it were actually dawn which he felt, or that anyway the dark globe on which people lived had passed the dead point at which the ill and the weary were supposed to be prone to die and now it was beginning to turn again, soon beginning to spin again out of the last laggard reluctance of darkness—the garblement which was the city: the scabby hop poles which elevated the ragged palm-crests like the monstrous broom-sage out of an old country thought, the spent stage of last night's clatterfalque Nile barge supine now beneath today's white wings treading, the hydrant gouts gutter plaited with the trodden tinsel-dung of stars. "And at Alphonse's and Renaud's the waiters that can not only understand Mississippi Valley French but they can even fetch back from the kitchen what you were not so sure yourself you told them to," he thought, passing among the desks by feel now and rolling the paper into his coat for pillow before stretching out on the floor. "Yair," he thought, "in bed now, and he will come in and she will say *Did you get it?* and he will say *What? Get what? Oh, you mean the ship. Yair, we got it. That's what we went over there for.*"

It was not the sun that waked him, nor what would have been the sun save for the usual winter morning's overcast: he just waked, regardless of the fact that during the past forty-eight hours he had slept but little more than he had eaten, like so many people who, living always on the outside of the mechanical

regimentation of hours, seem able at need to coincide with a given moment a sort of unflagging instinctive facility. But the train would be ordered by mechanical postulation, and there would be no watch or clock in the building yet. Gaunt, worn (he had not even paused to wash his face), he ran down the stairs and along the street itself; still running he turned in this side of the window and the immemorial grape-fruit halves which apparently each morning at the same moment at which the street lamps went out would be set out, age- and time-proved for intactness and imperviousness like the peasant vases exhumed from Greek and Roman ruins, between the paper poinsettias and the easel bearing the names of food printed upon interchangeable metal strips. In the city-room they called it the Dirty Spoon: one of ten thousand narrow tunnels furnished with a counter, a row of buttock-polished backless stools, a coffee urn and a Greek proprietor resembling a retired wrestler adjacent to ten thousand newspapers and dubbed by ten thousand variations about the land; the same thick-bodied Greek in the same soiled drill jacket might have looked at him across the same glass coffin filled with bowls of cereal and oranges and plates of buns apparently exhumed along with the grape-fruit in the window, only just this moment varnished. Then the reporter was able to see the clock on the rear wall; it was only fifteen past seven. "Well, for Christ's sake," he said.

"Coffee?" the Greek said.

"Yair," the reporter said. "I ought to eat too," he thought. Looking down into the glass-walled and topped gutter beneath his hands, not with any revulsion now, but with a kind of delicate distasteful abstemiousness like the old women in novels. And not from impatience, hurry: just as last night he seemed to see his blind furious course circling implacably back to the point where he had lost control of it like a kind of spiritual ground-loop, now he seemed to feel it straighten out at last, already lifting him steadily and undeviatingly onward so that now he need make no effort to move with it; all he had to do now was to remember to carry along with him everything which he was likely to need because this time he was not coming back.

"Gimme one of these," he said, tapping the glass with one hand while with the other he touched, felt, the folded slip of paper in his watch-pocket. He ate the bun along with his coffee, tasting neither, feeling only the coffee's warmth; it was now twenty-five past seven. "I can walk," he thought. The overcast would burn away later. But it still lay overhead when he entered the station where Shumann rose from the bench. "Had some breakfast yet?" the reporter said.

"Yes," Shumann said. The reporter looked at the other with a kind of bright grave intensity.

"Come on," he said. "We can get on now." The lights still burned in the train shed; the skylight was the same colour of the sky outside. "It will be gone soon though," the reporter said. "Maybe by the time we get there; you will probably fly the ship back in the sun. Just think of that." But it was gone before that; it was gone when they ran clear of the city; the car (they had the entire end of it to themselves) ran almost at once into thin sunlight. "I told you you would fly back in the sunshine," the reporter said. "I guess we had better fix this up now, too." He took out the note; he watched with that grave bright intensity while Shumann read it and then seemed to muse upon it soberly.

"Five thousand," Shumann said. "That's . . ."

"High?" the reporter said. "Yair. I didn't want there to be any hitch until we got into the air with it, got back to the airport with it. To look like a price that even Marchand wouldn't dare refuse to . . . " He watched Shumann, bright, quiet, grave.

"Yair," Shumann said. "I see." He reached into his coat. Then perhaps it was the fountain pen, though the reporter did not move yet and the brightness and intensity and gravity had not altered as he watched the deliberate, unhurried, slightly awkward movement of the pen across the blank signature line beneath the one where he had signed, watching the letters emerge: *Roger Shumann*. But he did not move even then; it was not until the pen without stopping dropped down to the third line and was writing again that he leaned and stopped it with

his hand, looking at the half-finished third name: *Dr. Carl S——*

"Wait," he said. "What's that?"

"It's my father's name."

"Would he let you sign it on this?"

"He'd have to, after it was done. Yes. He would help you out on it."

"Help me out on it?"

"I wouldn't be worth even five hundred unless I managed to finish that race first." A train-man passed, swinging from seat-back to seat-back, pausing above them for a moment.

"Blaisedell," he said. "Blaisedell."

"Wait," the reporter said. "Maybe I didn't understand. I ain't a flyer; all I know is that hour's dual Matt gave me that time. I thought maybe what Matt meant was he didn't want to risk having the under-carriage busted or the propeller bent or maybe a wing-tip. . . ." He looked at Shumann, bright, grave, his hand still holding Shumann's wrist.

"I guess I can land it all right," Shumann said. But the reporter did not move, looking at Shumann.

"Then it will be all right? It'll just be landing it, like what Matt said about the time he landed it?"

"I guess so," Shumann said. The train began to slow; the oleander bushes, the moss-hung live-oaks in which light threads of mist-snared gossamer glinted in the sun; the vine-shrouded station flowed up, slowing; it would not quite pass.

"Because, Jesus, it's just the money prize; it's just one afternoon. And Matt will help you build your ship back and you will be all set with it for the next meet." They looked at one another.

"I guess I can get it back down," Shumann said.

"Yair. But listen——"

"I can land it," Shumann said.

"All right," the reporter said. He released the other's wrist; the pen moved again, completing the signature steadily: *Dr. Carl Shumann, by Roger Shumann.* The reporter took the note, rising.

"All right," he said. "Let's go." They walked again; it was about a mile; presently the road ran beside the field beyond which they could see the buildings—the detached office, the shop, the hangar with a broad legend above the open doors: ORD-ATKINSON AIRCRAFT CORPORATION—all of pale brick, as neat as and apparently contemporaneous with Ord's new house. Sitting on the ground a little back from the road they watched two mechanics wheel out the red-and-white monoplane with which Ord had set his record and start it and warm it, and then they saw Ord himself come out of the office, get into the racer, taxi to the end of the field and turn and take off straight over their heads, already travelling a hundred feet ahead of his own sound. "It's forty miles over to Feinman from here," the reporter said. "He flies it in ten minutes. Come on. You let me do the talking. Jesus," he cried, in a kind of light amazed exultation, "I never told a lie in my life that anybody believed; maybe this is what I have been needing all the time!" When they reached the hangar the doors were now closed to a crack just large enough for a man to enter. Shumann entered, already looking about, until he found the aeroplane—a low-wing monoplane with a big nose and a tubular fuselage ending in a curiously flattened tail-group which gave it the appearance of having been drawn lightly and steadily through a huge lightly-closed gloved fist. "There it is," the reporter said.

"Yair," Shumann said. "I see. . . . Yes," he thought, looking quietly at the queer empennage, the blunt short cylindrical body; "I guess Ord wasn't so surprised, at that." Then he heard the reporter speaking to someone and he turned and saw a squat man with a shrewd Cajun face above a scrupulously clean coverall.

"This is Mr. Shumann," the reporter said, saying in a tone of bright amazement: "You mean Matt never told you? We have bought that ship." Shumann did not wait. For a moment he watched Marchand, the note in both hands, looking at it with that baffled immobility behind which the mind flicks and darts like a terrier inside a fence.

"Yair," Shumann thought, without grimness, "he can't pass

five thousand dollars any more than I could. Not without warning, anyway." He went on to the aeroplane, though once or twice he looked back and saw Marchand and the reporter, the Cajun still emanating that stubborn and slowly crystallizing bewilderment while the reporter talked, flapped, before him with an illusion of being held together only by the clothes he wore; once he even heard the reporter:

"Sure, you could telephone to Feinman and catch him. But for God's sake don't let anybody overhear how Matt stuck us for five thousand bucks for the damn crate. He promised he wouldn't tell." But there was no telephoning done apparently, because almost at once (or so it seemed to Shumann) the reporter and Marchand were beside him, the reporter quiet now, watching him with that bright attention.

"Let's get it out where we can look at it," Shumann said. They rolled it out on to the apron, where it squatted again, seemed to. It had none of the wasp-waisted trimness of the ones at the airport. It was blunt, a little thick-bodied, almost sluggish looking; its lightness when moved by hand seemed curiously paradoxical. For a good minute the reporter and Marchand watched Shumann stand looking at it with thoughtful gravity. "All right," he said at last. "Let's wind her up." Now the reporter spoke, leaning lightly and slightly just off balance like a ragged penstaff dropped point first into the composition apron:

"Listen. You said last night maybe it was the distribution of the weight; you said how maybe if we could shift the weight somehow while it was in the air that maybe you could find . . ." Later (almost as soon as Shumann was out of sight the reporter and Marchand were in Marchand's car on the road to the village, where the reporter hired a cab, scrambling into it even before he had asked the price and yelling out of his gaunt and glare-fixed face, "Hell, no! Not New Valois! Feinmann Airport!") he lived and relived the blind timeless period during which he lay on his stomach in the barrel, clutching the two body members, with nothing to see but Shumann's feet on the rudder pedals and the movement of the aileron balance-rod and

nothing to feel but terrific motion—not speed and not progress —just blind, furious motion like a sealed force trying to explode the monococque barrel in which he lay from the waist down on his stomach, leaving him clinging to the body members in space. He was still thinking, "Jesus, maybe we are going to die and all it is is a taste like sour hot salt in your mouth," even while looking out the car window at the speeding march and swamp through which they skirted the city, thinking with a fierce and triumphant conviction of immortality, "We flew it! We flew it!"

Now the airport; the forty miles accomplished before he knew it, what with his skull still cloudy with the light tag ends of velocity and speed like the drifting feathers from a shot bird so that he had never become conscious of the sheer inertia of dimension, space, distance, through which he had had to travel. He was thrusting the five-dollar bill at the driver before the car began to turn into the plaza and he was out of it before it had stopped, running towards the hangar, probably not even aware that the first race was in progress. Wild-faced, gaunt and sunken-eyed from lack of sleep and from strain, his clothes ballooning about him, he ran into the hangar and on to where Jiggs stood at the work-bench with a new bottle of polish and a new tin of paste open before him, shining the boots, working now with tedious and intent concern at the scar on the instep of the right one. "Did he——" the reporter cried.

"Yair, he landed it, all right," Jiggs said. "He used all the field, though. Jesus, I thought for a while he was going to run out of airport before he even cut the gun; when he stopped you couldn't have dropped a match between the prop and the sea wall. They are all upstairs now, holding the caucus."

"It'll qualify itself!" the reporter cried. "I told him that. I may not know aeroplanes but I know sewage Board Jews!"

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Anyway, he won't have to make but two landings with it. And he's already made one of them."

"Two?" the reporter cried; now he glared at Jiggs with more than exultation: with ecstasy. "He's already made two! We made one before he left Ord's!"

"We?" Jiggs said. With the boot and the rag poised he blinked painfully at the reporter with the one good hot bright eye. "We?"

"Yair; him and me! He said how it was the weight—that maybe if we could just shift the weight somehow while it was in the air—and he said, 'Are you afraid?' and I said, 'Hell, yes. But not if you ain't, because Matt gave me an hour once, or maybe if I had had more than an hour I wouldn't have been.' So Marchand helped us take the seat out and we rigged another one so there would be room under it for me and I slid back into the fuselage because it ain't got any cross-bracing, it's mon—mon——"

"Monococque," Jiggs said. "Jesus Christ, do you mean——"

"Yair. And him and Marchand rigged the seat again and he showed me where to hold on and I could just see his heels and that was all; I couldn't tell; yair, after a while I knew we were flying, but I couldn't tell forward nor backward or anything because, Jesus, I just had one hour with Matt and then he cut the gun and then I could hear him—Jesus, we might have been standing on the ground—he said quiet, 'Now slide back. Easy. But hold tight." And then I was hanging just by my hands; I wasn't even touching the floor of it at all. Jesus, I was thinking, 'Well, here it is then; it will be tough about that race this afternoon'; I didn't even know we were on the ground again until I found out it was him and Marchand lifting the seat out and Marchand saying, 'Goddamn. Goddamn. Goddamn,' and him looking at me and the bastard crate standing there quiet as one of them photographs on Grandlieu Street, and then he says, 'Would you go up again?' and I said, 'Yes. You want to go now?' and he said, 'Let's get her on over to the field and qualify.' "

"Sweet Jesus Christ," Jiggs said.

"Yair," the reporter cried. "It was just weight distribution: him and Marchand rigged up a truck inner tube full of sand on a pulley so he can—— And put the seat back and even if they see the end of the cable they wouldn't—— Because the only ship in it that can beat him is Ord's and the purse ain't but two thousand and Ord don't need it, he is only in it so New Valois folks

can see him fly the Ninety-Two once, and he ain't going to beat that fifteen-thousand-dollar ship to death just to——"

"Here; here," Jiggs said. "You're going to blow all to pieces in a minute. Smoke a cigarette; ain't you got some?" The reporter fumbled the cigarettes out at last, though it was Jiggs who took two from the pack and struck the match while the reporter stooped to it, trembling. The dazed, spent, wild look was still on his face, but he was quieter now.

"So they were all out to meet him, were they?"

"Jesus, did they," Jiggs said. "And Ord out in front; he recognized the ship as soon as it come in sight; Jesus, I bet he recognized it before Roger even recognized the airport, and by the time he landed you would have thought he was Lindbergh. And him sitting there in the cockpit and looking at them and Ord hollering at him and then they all come back up the apron like Roger was a kidnapper or something and went into the administration building and a minute later the microphone begun to holler for the inspector, what's his——"

"Sales," the reporter said. "It's licensed; they can't stop him."

"Sales can ground it, though," Jiggs said.

"Yair." The reporter was already turning, moving. "But Sales ain't nothing but a Federal officer; Feinman is a Jew and on the sewage board."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"What?" the reporter cried, glaring, gaunt, apparently having already rushed on and out of his precarious body so that only the shell glared back at Jiggs. "What? What's he holding this meet for? What did he—do you think maybe he built this airport just for a smooth place for aeroplanes to land on?" He went on, not running yet but fast. As he hurried up the apron the aeroplanes overtook and passed him, banked around the field pylon and faded on; he did not even look at them. Then suddenly he saw her, leading the little boy by the hand, emerge from the crowd about the gate to intercept him, wearing now a clean linen dress under the trench-coat, and a hat, the brown hat of the first evening. He stopped. His hand went into his pocket and into his face came

the expression, bright, quiet, almost smiling, as she walked fast up to him, staring at him with pale and urgent intensity.

"What is it?" she said. "What is this you have got him into?" He looked down at her with that expression, not yearning nor despair, but profound, tragic and serene like in the eyes of bird dogs.

"It's all right," he said. "My signature is on the note, too. It will hold. I am going in right now to testify; that's all that's holding them; that's all that Ord has to——" He drew out the nickel and gave it to the boy.

"What?" she said. "Note? Note? The ship, you idiot!"

"Oh." He smiled down at her. "The ship. We flew it, tested it over there. We made a field hop before we——"

"We?"

"Yes. I went with him. I laid on the floor in the tail, so we could find out where the weight ought to be to pass the burble. That's all it was. We have a sandbag rigged now on a cable so he can let it slide back. It's all right."

"All right?" she said. "Good God, what can you know about it? Did he say it was all right?"

"Yes. He said last night he could land it. I knew he could. And now he won't need to make but one more. . . ." She stared at him, the eyes pale, cold and urgent, at the face worn, dreamy, and peaceful in the soft bright sun; again the aeroplanes came in and snored on and away. Then he was interrupted; it was the amplifier; all the amplifiers up and down the apron began to call his name, telling the stands, the field, the land and lake and air, that he was wanted in the superintendent's office at once. "There it is," he said. "Yair. I knew that the note would be the only thing that Ord could . . . That was why I signed it, too. And don't you worry; all I need to do is walk in and say, 'Yes, that's my signature.' And don't you worry. He can fly it. He can fly anything. I used to think that Matt Ord was the best pilot alive, but now I——"

The amplifier began to repeat itself. It faced him; it seemed to stare straight at him while it roared his name deliberately as though he had to be summoned not out of the living world of

population but evoked, peremptory and repetitive, out of the air itself. The one in the rotunda was just beginning again when he entered; the sound followed him through the door and across the ante-room, though beyond that it did not reach—not into the board room of yesterday where now Ord and Shumann alone occupied the hard chairs. They had been ushered in a half-hour ago and sat down facing the men behind the table; Shumann saw Feinman for the first time, sitting not in the centre but at one end of the table where the announcer had sat yesterday, his suit, double-breasted still, tan instead of grey beneath the bright splash of the carnation. He alone wore his hat; it appeared to be the smallest object about him; from beneath it his dark smooth face began at once to droop into folds of flesh which, constricted for the instant by his collar, swelled and rolled again beneath the tight creases of his coat. On the table one hand bearing a gold-clamped ruby held a burning cigar. He did not even glance at Shumann and Ord; he was looking at Sales, the inspector . . . a square bald man with a blunt face which ordinarily would be quite pleasant, though not now . . . who was saying:

"Because I can ground it. I can forbid it to fly."

"You mean, you can forbid anybody to fly it, don't you?" Feinman said.

"Put it that way if you want to," Sales said.

"Let's say, put it that way for the record," another voice said—a young man, sleek, in horn-rim glasses, sitting just back of Feinman. He was Feinman's secretary; he spoke now with a kind of silken insolence, like the pampered, intelligent, hate-ridden eunuch mountebank of an eastern despot: "Colonel Feinman is, even before a public servant, a lawyer."

"Yes; lawyer," Feinman said. "Maybe country lawyer to Washington. Let me get this straight. You're a government agent. All right. We have had our crops regimented and our fisheries regimented and even our money in the bank regimented. All right. I still don't see how they did it, but they did, and so we are used to that. If he was trying to make his living out of the ground and Washington come in and regimented him,

all right. We might not understand it any more than he did, but we would say all right. And if he was trying to make his living out of the river and the government come in and regimented him, we would say all right, too. But do you mean to tell me that Washington can come in and regiment a man that's trying to make his living out of the air? Is there a crop reduction in the air, too?" They—the others about the table (three of them were reporters)—laughed. They laughed with a kind of sudden and loud relief, as though they had been waiting all the time to find out just how they were supposed to listen, and now they knew. Only Sales and Shumann and Ord did not laugh; then they noticed that the secretary was not laughing either and that he was already speaking, seemed to slide his silken voice into the laughter and stop it as abruptly as a cocaine needle in a nerve:

"Yes. Colonel Feinman is lawyer enough (perhaps Mr. Sales will add, country enough) to ask even a government official to show cause. As the colonel understands it, this aeroplane bears a licence which Mr. Sales approved himself. Is that true, Mr. Sales?" For a moment Sales did not answer. He just looked at the secretary grimly.

"Because I don't believe it is safe to fly," he said. "That's the cause."

"Ah," the secretary said. "For a moment I almost expected Mr. Sales to tell us that it would not fly; that it had perhaps walked over here from Blaisedell. Then all we would need to say would be 'Good; we will not make it fly; we will just let it walk around the pylons during the race this afternoon——' " Now they did laugh, the three reporters scribbling furiously. But it was not for the secretary: it was for Feinman. The secretary seemed to know this; while he waited for it to subside his unsmiling, insolent contempt touched them all face by face. Then he spoke to Sales again. "You admit that it is licensed, that you approved it yourself—meaning, I take it, that it is registered at Washington as being fit and capable of discharging the function of an aeroplane, which is to fly. Yet you later state that you will not permit it to fly because it is not capable of discharging the

function for which you yourself admit having approved it—in simple language for us lawyers, that it cannot fly. Yet Mr. Ord has just told us that he flew it in your presence. And Mr."—he glanced down, the pause was less than pause—"Shumann states that he flew it once at Blaisedell before witnesses, and we know that he flew it here because we saw him. We all know that Mr. Ord is one of the best (we New Valoisians believe *the* best) pilots in the world, but don't you think it barely possible, barely, I say, that the man who has flown it twice where Mr. Ord has flown it but once . . . Wouldn't this almost lead one to think that Mr. Ord has some other motive for not wanting this aeroplane to compete in this race——"

"Yair," Feinman said. He turned to look at Ord. "What's the matter? Ain't this airport good enough for your ships? Or ain't this race important enough for you? Or do you just think he might beat you? Ain't you going to use the aeroplane you broke the record in? Then what are you afraid of?" Ord glared from face to face about the table, then at Feinman again.

"Why do you want this ship in there this afternoon? What is it? I'd lend him the money, if that's all it is."

"Why?" Feinman said. "Ain't we promised these folks out there"—he made a jerking sweep with the cigar—"a series of races? Ain't they paying their money in here to see them? And ain't it the more aeroplanes they will have to look at the better they will think they got for the money? And why should he want to borrow money from you when he can maybe earn it at his job where he won't have to pay it back or even the interest? Now, let's settle this business." He turned to Sales. "The ship is licensed, ain't it?" After a moment Sales said:

"Yes." Feinman turned to Ord.

"And it will fly, won't it?" Ord looked at him for a long moment too.

"Yes," he said. Now Feinman turned to Shumann.

"Is it dangerous to fly?" he said.

"They all are," Shumann said.

"Well, are you afraid to fly it?" Shumann looked at him. "Do you expect it to fall with you this afternoon?"

"If I did I wouldn't take it up," Shumann said. Suddenly Ord rose; he was looking at Sales.

"Mac," he said, "this ain't getting anywhere. I will ground the ship myself." He turned to Shumann. "Listen, Roger——"

"On what grounds, Mr. Ord?" the secretary said.

"Because it belongs to me. Is that grounds enough for you?"

"When an authorized agent of your corporation has accepted a legal monetary equivalent for it and surrendered the machine?"

"But they are not good for the note. I know that. I was a damn stick-straddler myself until I got a break. Why, damn it, one of the names on it is admitted to not be signed by the owner of it. And listen: yair; I don't even know whether Shumann did the actual signing; whoever signed it signed it before I saw it or even before Marchand saw it. See?" He glared at the secretary, who looked at him in turn with his veiled, contemptuous glance.

"I see," the secretary said pleasantly. "I was waiting for you to bring that up. You seem to have forgotten that the note has a third signer." Ord stared at him for a minute.

"But he ain't good for it either," he said.

"Possibly not, alone. But Mr. Shumann tells us that his father is and that his father will honour this signature. So by your own token, the question seems to resolve to whether or not Mr. Shumann did or did not sign his and his father's name to the note. And we seem to have a witness to that. It is not exactly legal, I grant you. But this other signer is known to some of us here; you know him yourself, you tell us, to be a person of unassailable veracity. We will have him in." Then it was that the amplifiers began to call the reporter's name; he entered; he came forward while they watched him. The secretary extended the note towards him. ("Jesus," the reporter thought, "they must have sent a ship over for Marchand.")

"Will you examine this?" the secretary said.

"I know it," the reporter said.

"Will you state whether or not you and Mr. Shumann signed it in each other's presence and in good faith?" The reporter

looked about, at the faces behind the table, at Shumann sitting with his head bent a little and at Ord half-risen, glaring at him. After a moment Shumann turned his head and looked quietly at him.

"Yes," the reporter said. "We signed it."

"There you are," Feinman said. He rose. "That's all. Shumann has possession; if Ord wants any more to be stubborn about it we will just let him run to town and see if he can get back with a writ of replevin before time for the race."

"But he can't enter it!" Ord said. "It ain't qualified." Feinman paused long enough to look at Ord for a second with impersonal inscrutability.

"Speaking for the citizens of Franciana who donated the ground and for the citizens of New Valois that built the airport the race is going to be run on, I will waive qualifications."

"You can't waive the A.A.A.," Ord said. "You can't make it official if he wins the whole damn meet."

"Then he will not need to rush back to town to pawn a silver cup," Feinman said. He went out; the others rose from the table and followed. After a moment Ord turned quietly to Shumann.

"Come on," he said. "We'd better check her over."

The reporter did not see them again. He followed them through the rotunda, through the amplifier's voice and through the throng at the gates, or so he thought because his police card had passed him before he remembered that they would have had to go around to reach the apron. But he could see the aeroplane with a crowd standing around it. The woman had forgotten too that Shumann and Ord would have to go around and through the hangar; she emerged again from the crowd beneath the bandstand. "So they did it," she said. "They let him."

"Yes. It was all right. Like I told you."

"They did it," she said, staring at him, yet speaking as though in amazed soliloquy. "Yes. You fixed it."

"Yes. I knew that's all it would be. I wasn't worried. And don't you . . ." She didn't move for a moment; there was nothing of distraction especially; he just seemed to hang

substance-less in the long peaceful backwash of waiting, saying quietly out of the dreamy smiling, "Yair. Ord talking about how he would be disqualified for the cup, the prize, like that would stop him, like that was what . . ." not even aware that it was only the shell of her speaking quietly back to him, asking him if he would mind the boy.

"Since you seem to be caught up for the time."

"Yair," he said. "Of course." Then she was gone, the white dress and the trench-coat lost in the crowd—the ones with ribbon badges and the ones in dungarees—which streamed suddenly down the apron towards the dark horse, the sensation. As he stood so, holding the little boy by one damp sticky hand, the Frenchman Despleins passed again down the runway which paralleled the stands, on one wheel; the reporter watched him take off and half roll, climbing upside down. Now he heard the voice; he had not heard it since it called his own name, despite the fact that it had never ceased, perhaps because of the fact:

". . . oh oh oh, mister, don't, don't! Oh, mister! Please get up high enough so your parachute can try to open! Now, now; now, now. . . . Oh, Mac! Oh, Mr. Sales! Make him stop!" The reporter looked down at the boy.

"I bet you a dime you haven't spent that nickel," he said.

"Naw," the boy said. "I ain't had a chance to. She wouldn't let me."

"Well, my goodness!" the reporter said. "I owe you twenty cents then, don't I? Come——" He paused, turning; it was the photographer, the man whom he had called Jug, laden again with the enigmatic and faintly macabre utensils of his calling so that he resembled vaguely a trained dog belonging to a country doctor.

"Where in hell you been?" the photographer said. "Hagood told me to find you at ten o'clock."

"Here I am," the reporter said. "We're just going inside to spend twenty cents. Want to come?" Now the Frenchman came up the runway about twenty feet high and on his back, his head and face beneath the cockpit-rim motionless and alert like

that of a roach or a rat immobile behind a crack in a wainscot, his neat short beard unstirred by any wind as though cast in one piece of bronze.

"Yair," the photographer said; perhaps it was the bilious aspect of an inverted world seen through a hooded lens or emerging in grimacing and attitudinal miniature from stinking trays in a celibate and stygian cell lighted by a red lamp: "and have that guy come down on his whiskers and me not here to get it?"

"All right," the reporter said. "Stay and get it." He turned to go on.

"Yair; but Hagood told me——" the photographer said. The reporter turned back.

"All right," he said. "But hurry up."

"Hurry up what?"

"Snap me. You can show it to Hagood when you go in." He and the boy went on; he did not walk back into the voice, he had never walked out of it:

". . . an in-ver-ted spin, folks; he's going into it still upside down—oh oh oh oh——" The reporter stooped suddenly and lifted the boy to his shoulder.

"We can make better time," he said. "We will want to get back in a few minutes." They passed through the gate, among the gaped and upturned faces which choked the gangway. "That's it," he thought quietly, with that faint quiet grimace almost like smiling; "they ain't human. It ain't adultery; you can't any more imagine two of them making love than you can two of them aeroplanes back in the corner of the hangar, coupled." With one hand he supported the boy on his shoulder, feeling through the harsh khaki the young brief living flesh. "Yair; cut him and it's cylinder oil; dissect him and it ain't bones: it's little rocker arms and connecting rods. . . ." The restaurant was crowded; they did not wait to eat the ice-cream there on a plate; with one cone in his hand and one in the boy's and the two chocolate bars in his pocket they were working back through the crowded gangway when the bomb went off and then the voice:

". . . fourth event unlimited free-for-all, Vaughn Trophy race, prize two thousand dollars. You will not only have a

chance to see Matt Ord in his famous Ninety-Two Ord-Atkinson Special in which he set a new land plane speed record, but as a surprise entry through the courtesy of the American Aeronautical Association and the Feinman Airport Commission, Roger Shumann, who yesterday nosed over in a forced landing, in a special rebuilt job that Matt Ord rebuilt himself. Two horses from the same stable, folks, and two pilots both of whom are so good that it is a pleasure to give the citizens of New Valois and Franciana the chance to see them pitted against each other. . . ." He and the boy watched the take-off, then they went on. Presently he found her—the brown hat and the coat—and he came up and stood a little behind her, steadying the boy on his shoulder and carrying the second melting cone in his other hand as the four aeroplanes came in on the first lap—the red-and-white monoplane in front and two more side by side and some distance back, so that at first he did not even see Shumann. Then he saw him, higher than the others and well outside, though the voice now was not from the amplifier but from a mechanic:

"Jesus, look at Shumann! It must be fast: he's flying twice as far as the rest of them—or maybe Ord ain't trying.—Why in hell don't he bring it on in?" Then the voice was drowned in the roar, the snarl, as the aeroplanes turned the field pylon and, followed by the turning heads along the apron as if the faces were geared to the sound, diminished singly out and over the lake again, Shumann still quite wide, making a turn that was almost a skid yet holding his position. They converged towards the second pylon, the lake one, in slightly irregular order and tiny now with distance and with Shumann still cautiously high and outside, they wafted lightly upwards and around the pylon. Now the reporter could hear the mechanic again: "He's coming in now, watch him. Jesus, he's second—he's diving in—Jesus, he's going to be right behind Ord on this pylon; maybe he was just feeling it out——" The noise was faint now and disseminated; the drowsy afternoon was domed with it and the four machines seemed to hover like dragon-flies silently in vacuum, in various distance-softened shades of pastel against the

ineffable blue, with now a quality trivial, random, almost like notes of music—a harp, say—as the sun glinted and lost them. The reporter leaned down to the woman who was not yet aware of his presence, crying:

"Watch him! Oh, can he fly! Can he fly! And Ord ain't going to beat the Ninety-Two to—— Second money Thursday, and if Ord ain't going to—— Oh, watch him! Watch him!" She turned: the jaw, pale eyes, the voice which he did not even listen to:

"Yes. The money will be fine." Then he even stopped looking at her, staring down the runway as the four aeroplanes, now in two distinct pairs, came in towards the field, increasing fast. The mechanic was talking again:

"He's in! Jesus, he's going to try Ord here! And look at Ord giving him room——" The two in front began to bank at the same time, side by side, the droning roar drawing down and in as though sucked down out of the sky by them in place of being produced by them. The reporter's mouth was still open; he knew that by the needling of nerves in his sore jaw. Later he was to remember seeing the ice-cream cone crush in his fist and begin to ooze between his fingers as he let the little boy slide to the ground and took his hand. Not now though; now the two aeroplanes, side by side, and Shumann outside and above, banked into the pylon as though bolted together, when the reporter suddenly saw something like a light scattering of burnt paper or feathers floating in the air above the pylon-tip He was watching this, his mouth still open, when a voice somewhere said, "Ahhhhhhh!" and he saw Shumann now shooting almost straight upward and then a whole waste-basketful of the light trash blew out of the aeroplane.

They said later about the apron that he used the last of his control before the fuselage broke to zoom out of the path of the two aeroplanes behind while he looked down at the close-peopled land and the empty lake, and made a choice before the tail-group came completely free. But most of them were busy saying how his wife took it, how she did not scream or faint (she was standing quite near the microphone, near enough for

it to have caught the scream) but instead just stood there and watched the fuselage break in two and said, "Oh, damn you, Roger! Oh, damn you! damn you!" and turning, snatched the little boy's hand and ran towards the sea-wall, the little boy dangling vainly on his short legs between her and the reporter who, holding the little boy's other hand, ran at his loose lightly-clattering gallop like a scarecrow in a gale, after the bright plain shape of love. Perhaps it was the added weight because she turned, still running, and gave him a single pale, cold, terrible look, crying:

"God damn you to hell! Get away from me!"

Love-song of J. A. Prufrock

On the shell beach between the boulevard and the seaplane slip one of the electric company's trucks stood while its crew set up a searchlight at the water's edge. When the photographer called Jug saw the reporter; he was standing beside the empty truck, in the backwash which it created between the faces beyond the police line, and the men—police and newspaper men and airport officials and the others, the ones without authority or object who manage to pass police lines at all scenes of public violence—gathered along the beach. The photographer approached at a flagging trot, the camera banging against his flank. "Christ Almighty," he said. "I got that, all right. Only Jesus, I near vomited into the box while I was changing plates." Beyond the crowd at the water-edge and just beyond the outer markers of the seaplane basin a police-launch was scattering the fleet of small boats which, like most of the people on the beach itself, had appeared as though by magic from nowhere like crows, to make room for the dredge-boat to anchor over the spot where the aeroplane was supposed to have sunk. The seaplane slip, dredged out, was protected from the sluggish encroachment of the lake's muddy bottom by a sunken mole composed of refuse from the city itself—shards of condemned paving and masses of fallen walls and even discarded automobile bodies—any and all the refuse of man's twentieth century clotting into communities large enough to pay a mayor's salary—dumped into the lake. Either directly above or just outside of this mass the aeroplane was believed, from the accounts of three oystermen in a dory who were about two hundred yards away, to have struck the water. The three versions varied as to the exact spot, despite the fact that both wings had reappeared on the surface almost immediately and been towed ashore, but then one of the oystermen (from the field, the apron, Shumann had been

seen struggling to open the cockpit hatch as though to jump, as though with the intention of trying to open his parachute despite his lack of height)—one of the oystermen claimed that the body had fallen off the machine, having either extricated itself or been flung out. But the three agreed that the body and the machine were both either upon or beside the mole from whose vicinity the police-launch was now harrying the small boats.

It was after sunset. Upon the mirror-smooth water even the little foul skiffs—the weathered and stinking dories and dinghies of oyster- and shrimp-men—had a depthless and fairy-light quality as they scattered like butterflies or moths before a mechanical reaper, just ahead of the trim, low, martial-coloured police-launch, on to at which the moment the photographer saw being transferred from one of the skiffs two people whom he recognized as being the dead pilot's wife and child. Among them the dredge looked like something antediluvian crawled for the first time into light, roused but not alarmed by the object or creature out of the world of light and air which had plunged without warning into the watery fastness where it had been asleep. "Jesus," the photographer said. "Why wasn't I standing right here: Hagood would have had to raise me then. Jesus God," he said in a hoarse tone of hushed and unbelieving amazement, "how's it now for being a poor bastard that never even learned to roller-skate?" The reporter looked at him, for the first time. The reporter's face was perfectly calm; he looked down at the photographer, turning carefully as though he were made of glass and knew it, blinking a little, and spoke in a peaceful dreamy voice such as might be heard where a child is sick—not sick for a day or even two days, but for so long that even wasting anxiety has become mere surface habit:

"She told me to go away. I mean, to go clean away, like to another town."

"She did?" the photographer said. "To what town?"

"You don't understand," the reporter said, in that peaceful baffled voice. "Let me explain to you."

"Yair; sure," the photographer said. "I still feel like vomiting

too. But I got to get on in with these plates. And I bet you ain't even phoned in. Have you?"

"What?" the reporter said. "Yes. I phoned in. But listen. She didn't understand. She told me——"

"Come on, now," the other said. "You will have to call in with the build-up on it. Jesus, I tell you I feel bad too. Here, smoke a cigarette. Yair. I could vomit too. But what the hell? He ain't our brother. Come on, now." He took the cigarettes from the reporter's coat and took two from the pack and struck a match. The reporter roused somewhat; he took the burning match himself and held it to the two cigarettes. But then at once the photographer seemed to watch him sink back into that state of peaceful physical anæsthesia as though the reporter actually were sinking slowly away from him into clear and limpid water out of which the calm, slightly distorted face looked and the eyes blinked at the photographer with that myopic earnestness while the voice repeated patiently:

"But you don't understand. Let me explain it to——"

"Yair; sure," the other said. "You can explain it to Hagood while we are getting a drink." The reporter moved obediently. But before they had gone very far the photographer realized that they had reassumed their customary mutual physical complementing when working together: the reporter striding on in front and the photographer trotting to keep up. "That's the good thing about being him," the photographer thought. "He don't have to move very far to go nuts in the first place and so he don't have so far to come back."

"Yair," the reporter said. "Let's move. We got to eat, and the rest of them have got to read. And if they ever abolish fornication and blood, where in hell will we all be?—— Yair. You go on in with what you got; if they get it up right away it will be too dark to take anything. I'll stay out here and cover it. You can tell Hagood."

"Yair; sure," the photographer said, trotting, the camera bouncing against his flank. "We'll have a shot and we'll feel better. For Christ's sake, we never made him go up in it." Before they reached the rotunda the sunset had faded; even while

they walked up the apron the boundary lights came on, and now the flat sword-like sweep of the beacon swung in across the lake and vanished for an instant in a long *flick!* as the turning eye faded them full, and then reappeared again as it swung now over the land to complete its arc. The field, the apron, was empty, but the rotunda was full of people, and with a cavernous murmuring sound which seemed to linger not about the mouths which uttered it but to float somewhere about the high serene shadowy dome overhead. As they entered a newsboy screamed at them, flapping the paper, the headline: PILOT KILLED. Shumann Crashes Into Lake. SECOND FATALITY OF AIR-MEET as it too flicked away. The bar was crowded too, warm with lights and with human bodies. The photographer led the way now, shouldering into the rail, making room for the reporter beside him. "Rye, huh?" he said, then to the bar-tender, loudly: "Two ryes."

"Yair; rye," the reporter said. Then he thought quietly, "I can't. I cannot." He felt no revulsion from his insides; it was as though his throat and the organs of swallowing had experienced some irrevocable alteration of purpose from which he would suffer no inconvenience whatever, but which would for ever more mark the exchange of an old psychic as well as physical state for a new one, like the surrendering of a maidenhead. He felt profoundly and peacefully empty inside, as though he had vomited and very emptiness had supplied into his mouth or somewhere about his palate like a lubricant a faint thin taste of salt which was really pleasant: the taste not of despair but of Nothing. "I'll go and call in now," he said.

"Wait," the photographer said. "Here comes your drink."

"Hold it for me," the reporter said. "It won't take but a minute." There was a booth in the corner, the same from which he had called Hagood yesterday. As he dropped the coin in he closed the door behind him. The automatic dome light came on; he opened the door until the light went off again. He spoke, not loudly, his voice murmuring back from the close walls as he recapitulated at need with succinct and patient care as though reading into the telephone in a foreign tongue: ". . . yes,

f-u-s-e-l-a-g-e. The body of the aeroplane, broke off at the tail. . . . No, he couldn't have landed it. The pilots here said he used up what control he had left getting out of the way of the others and to head towards the lake instead of the grandst-—— No, they say not. He wasn't high enough for the chute to have opened even if he had got out of the ship . . . yair, dredge-boat was just getting into position when I . . . they say probably right against the mole; it may have struck the rocks and slid down. . . . Yair, if he should be close enough to all that muck the dredge-boat can't . . . yair, probably a diver to-morrow, unless sometime during the night. And by that time the crabs and gars will have . . . yair, I'll stay out here and flash you at midnight."

When he came out of the booth, back into the light, he began to blink again as if he had a little sand in his eyes, trying to recall exactly what eye-moisture tasted like, wondering if perhaps the thin moist salt in his mouth might not somehow have got misplaced from where it belonged. The photographer still held his place at the bar and the drink was waiting, though this time he only looked down at the photographer, blinking, almost smiling. "You go on and drink it," he said. "I forgot I went on the wagon yesterday." When they went out to the cab, it was dark; the photographer, ducking, the camera jouncing on its strap, scuttled into the cab, turning a face likewise amazed and spent.

"It's cold out here," he said. "Jesus, I'm going to lock the damn door and turn on both them red lamps and fill me a good big tray to smell and I'm going to just sit there and get warm. I'll tell Hagood you are on the job." The face vanished, the cab went on, curving away towards the boulevard where beyond and apparently just behind the ranked palms which lined it the glare of the city was visible even from here upon the overcast. People were still moiling back and forth across the plaza and in and out of the rotunda, and the nightly overcast had already moved in from the lake; against it the measured and regular sword-sweep of the beacon was quite distinct, and there was some wind in it too; a long breath of it at the moment came

down over the building and across the plaza and the palms along the boulevard began to clash and hiss with a dry wild sound. The reporter began to inhale the dark chill wind; it seemed to him that he could taste the lake, water, and he began to pant, drawing the air in by lungsful and expelling it and snatching another lungful of it as if he were locked inside a burning room and were hunting handful by handful through a mass of cotton batting for the door key. Ducking his head he hurried past the lighted entrance and the myriad eyes; his face for the time had frozen, like a piece of uncoiled machinery freezes, into a twisted grimace which filled his sore jaw with what felt like icy needles, so that Ord had to call him twice before he turned and saw the other getting out of his roadster, still in the suede jacket and the hind-part-before cap in which he flew.

"I was looking for you," Ord said, taking something from his pocket—the narrow strip of paper folded again as it had lain in the reporter's fob pocket this morning before he gave it to Marchand. "Wait; don't tear it," Ord said. "Hold it a minute." The reporter held it while Ord struck the match. "Go on," Ord said. "Look at it." With his other hand he opened the note out, holding the match so that the reporter could see it, identify it, waiting while the reporter stood with the note in his hand long enough to have examined it anyway. "That's it, ain't it?" Ord said.

"Yes," the reporter said.

"All right. Stick it to the match. I want you to do it yourself. . . . Damn it, drop it! Do you want to——" As it floated down the flame seemed to turn back and upward, to climb up the falling scrap and on into space, vanishing; the charred carbon leaf drifted on without weight or sound and Ord ground his foot on it. "You bastard," he said. "You bastard."

"God, yes," the reporter said, as quietly. "I'll make out another one to-morrow. You will just have to take me alone——"

"Like hell. What are they going to do now?"

"I don't know," the reporter said. Then at once he began to speak in that tone of peaceful and bemused incomprehensibility. "You see, she didn't understand. She told me to go away. I

mean, away. Let me ex——" But he stopped, thinking quietly, "Wait. I mustn't start that. I might not be able to stop it next time." He said: "They don't know yet, of course, until after the dredge . . . I'll be there. I'll see to them."

"Bring her on over home if you want to. But you better go yourself and take a couple of drinks. You don't look so good either."

"Yair," the reporter said. "Only I quit yesterday. I got mixed up and went on the wagon."

"Yes?" Ord said. "Well, I'm going home. You better get in touch with her right away. Get her away from here. Just put her in a car and come on over home. If it's where they say it is, it will take a diver to get him out." He returned to the roadster; the reporter had already turned on too, back towards the entrance before he was aware of it, stopping again; he could not do it—the lights and the faces, not even for the warmth of lights and human suspirations—thinking, "Jesus, if I was to go in there I would drown." He could go around the opposite hangar and reach the apron and be on his way back to the seaplane slip. But when he moved it was towards the first hangar, the one in which it seemed to him that he had spent enough of incomprehensible and unpredictable frenzy and travail to have been born and raised there, walking away from the lights and sound and faces, walking in solitude where despair and regret could sweep down over the building and across the plaza and on into the harsh thin hissing of the palms and so at least he could breathe it in, at least endure. It was as though some sixth sense, some economy out of profound inattention guided him, on through the blank door and the tool-room and into the hangar itself where in the hard light of the overhead clusters the motionless aeroplanes squatted in fierce and depthless relief among one another's monstrous shadows, and on to where Jiggs sat on the tongue of a dolly, the shined boots rigid and fiercely high lighted on his out-thrust feet, gnawing painfully at a sandwich with one side of his face, his head turned parallel to the earth like a dog eats while the one good eye rolled, painful and bloodshot, up at the reporter.

"What is it you want me to do?" Jiggs said. The reporter blinked down at him with quiet and myopic intensity.

"You see, she didn't understand," he said. "She told me to go away. To let her alone. And so I can't . . ."

"Yair," Jiggs said. He drew the boots under him and prepared to get up, but he stopped and sat so for a moment, his head bent and the sandwich in one hand, looking at what the reporter did not know, because at once the single eye was looking at him again. "Will you look behind that junk over in the corner there and get my bag?" Jiggs said. The reporter found the canvas bag hidden carefully beneath a rubbish-heap of empty oil cans and boxes and such; when he returned with it Jigs was already holding one foot out. "Would you mind giving it a pull?" The reporter took hold of the boot. "Pull it easy."

"Have they made your feet sore?" the reporter said.

"No. Pull it easy." The boots came off easier than they did two nights ago; the reporter watched Jiggs take from the sack a shirt not soiled but filthy, and wipe the boots carefully, upper sole and all, with an air thoughtful, intent, bemused, and wrap them in the shirt, put them into the sack and, again in the tennis shoes and the makeshift leggings, hide the sack once more in the corner, the reporter following him to the corner and then back as if it were now the reporter who was the dog.

"You see," he said (even as he spoke it seemed to him to be not himself speaking but something inside him which insisted on pre-empting his tongue)— "you see, I keep on trying to explain to somebody that she didn't understand. Only she understands exactly, don't she? He's out there in the lake and I can't think of anything plainer than that. Can you?" The main doors were locked now; they had to return through the tool-room as the reporter had entered. As they emerged the beacon's beam swept overhead again with its illusion of powerful and slow acceleration. "So they gave you all a bed this time," he said.

"Yair," Jiggs said. "The kid went to sleep on the police boat. Jack brought him in and they let them have a bed this time. She didn't come in. She ain't going to leave now, anyway. I'll try if you want to, though."

"Yes," the reporter said. "I guess you are right. I didn't mean to try to make . . . I just wanted to . . ." He began to think *now, now, NOW*, and it came: the long nebulous sword-stroke sweeping steadily up from beyond the other hangar until almost overhead and then accelerating with that illusion of terrific strength and speed which should have left a sound, a swish, behind it but did not. "You see, I don't know about these things. I keep on thinking about fixing it up so that a woman, another woman——"

"All right," Jiggs said. "I'll try."

"Just so she can see you and call you if she needs—wants . . . if . . . She won't even need to know I am . . . but if she should——"

"Yair. I'll fix it if I can." They went on around the other hangar. Now they could see half of the beacon's entire arc; the reporter could watch it as it swung across the lake, watching the skeleton-lattice of the empty bleachers come into relief against it, and the parapet of staffs from which the purple-and-gold pennons, black now, streamed rigid in the rising wind from the lake as the beam picked them up one by one and discarded them in swift and accelerating succession as it swept in and overhead and on. They could see the looped bunting too tossing and labouring and even here and there blown out of the careful loops of three days ago and whipping in forlorn and ceaseless shreds as though, sentient itself, it had anticipated the midnight bells from town which would signal the beginning of Lent.

And now, beyond the black rampart of the sea-wall, the searchlight beside whose truck the photographer had found the reporter was burning—a fierce white downward-glaring beam brighter though smaller than the beacon—and they saw presently another one on the tower of the dredge-boat itself. In fact, it was as though when they reached the sea-wall they would look down into a pit filled not by one steady source of light but by a luminous diffusion as though from the air-particles, beyond which the shore-line curved twinkling faintly away into darkness. But it was not until they reached the wall that they saw that the light came not from the searchlight on the shore nor

the one on the dredge-boat nor the one on the slowly cruising police-launch engaged still in harrying away the little skiffs from some of which puny flashlights winked but in most of which burned the weak turgid flame of kerosene—but from a line of automobiles drawn up along the boulevard. Extending for almost a mile along the shore and facing the water, their concerted refulgence, broken at short intervals by the buttons and shields of policemen and now by the sidearms and putties of a national guard company, glared down upon the disturbed and ceaseless dark water which seemed to surge and fall and surge and fall as though in travail of amazement and outrage.

There was a skiff just landing from the dredge-boat. While the reporter waited for Jiggs to return the dark steady chill wind pushed hard against him, through his thin clothes; it seemed to have passed through the lights, the faint human sounds and movement, without gaining anything of warmth or light. After a while he believed that he could discern the faint hissing plaint of the ground and powdered oyster shells on which he stood even above the deep steady humming of the searchlight not far away. The men from the skiff came up and passed him, Jiggs following. "It's like they said," Jiggs said. "It's right up against the rocks. I asked the guy if they had hooked anything yet and he said hooked, hell; they had hooked something the first throw with one hook and ain't even got the hook loose yet. But the other hook came up with a piece of that damn monococque plywood, and he said there was oil on it." He looked at the reporter. "So that will be from the belly."

"Yes," the reporter said.

"So it's bottom upwards. The guy says they think out there that it is fouled on some of them old automobiles and junk they throwed in to build it with.—Yair," he said, though the reporter had not spoken, but had only looked at him: "I asked that too. She's up yonder at that lunch-wagon getting——" The reporter turned; like the photographer Jiggs now had to trot to keep up, scrabbling up the shelving beach towards the ranked automobiles until he bumped into the reporter who had paused in the headlights' glare with his head lowered and one arm

raised before his face. "Over this way," Jiggs said, "I can see." He took the reporter's arm and guided him on to the gap in the cars where the steps led up from the beach and through the gap to where, across the boulevard, they could see the heads and shoulders against the broad low dingy window. Jiggs could hear the reporter breathing, panting, though the climb up from the beach had not been that hard. When the reporter's fumbling hand touched his own it felt like ice.

"She hasn't got any money," the reporter said. "Hurry. Hurry." Jiggs went on. Then the reporter could still see them—the faces pressed to the glass (for the instant he made one as he pushed through them and went around the end of the lunch-wagon to the smaller window)—looking in at her where she sat on one of the backless stools at the counter between a policeman and one of the mechanics whom the reporter had seen about the hangar. The trench-coat was open and there was a long smear either of oil or mud across the upper part of her white dress; she was eating a sandwich, wolfing it and talking to the two men; he watched her drop the fragments back into the plate, wipe her hand across her mouth and lift the thick mug of coffee and drink, wolfing the coffee too, the coffee, like the food, running down her chin from too fast swallowing. At last Jiggs finally found him, still standing there though now the counter was vacant and the faces had gone away too, followed back to the beach.

"Even the proprietor wanted to wash out the cheque, but I got there in time," Jiggs said. "She was glad to get it, too; you were right, she never had any money with her. Yair. She's like a man about not bumming from just any guy. Always was. So it's O.K." But he was still looking at the reporter with an expression which a more observing person than the reporter could not have read now in the tough face to which the blue and swollen eye and lip lent no quality evoking compassion or warmth but on the contrary merely increased a little the face's brutality. When he spoke again it was not in a rambling way exactly but with a certain curious alertness as of imminent and irrevocable dispersion; the reporter thought of a man trying to

herd a half-dozen blind sheep through a passage a little wider than he could span with his extended arms. Jiggs now had one hand in his pocket but the reporter did not notice it. "So she's going to have to be out here all night, in case they begin to . . . And the kid's already asleep; yair, no need to wake him up, and maybe to-morrow we will all know better where we . . . Yair, a night or two to sleep on it makes a lot of difference about anything, no matter how bad you think you h—— I mean . . ." He stopped. ("He ain't only not held the sheep, he ain't even holding out his arms any more," the reporter thought.) The hand came out of his pocket, opening; the door key glinted faintly on the grained palm. "She told me to give it back to you when I saw you," Jiggs said. "You come on and eat something yourself, now."

"Yes," the reporter said. "It will be a good chance to, won't it. Besides, we will be in out of the cold for a little while."

"Sure," Jiggs said. "Come on." It was warm inside the lunch-wagon; the reporter stopped shaking even before the food came. He ate a good deal of it, then he realized that he was going to eat all of it, without taste or enjoyment especially but with a growing conviction of imminent satisfaction like when a tooth cavity that has not been either pleasant or unpleasant is about to be filled without pain. The faces were gone from the window now, following her doubtless back to the beach, or as near to it as the police and soldiers would let them, where they now gazed no doubt at the police-boat or whatever other boat she had re-embarked in; nevertheless he and Jiggs still sat in it, breathed and chewed it along with the stale hot air and the hot rancid food—the breathing, the exhalation, the variations of the remark which the photographer had made; the ten thousand different smug and gratulant behind-sighted forms of *I might be a bum and a bastard but I am not out there in that lake.* But he did not see her again.

During the next three hours until midnight he did not leave the beach, while the ranked cars glared steadily downward and the searchlights hummed and the police-launch cruised in slow circles while the little boats moved outward before its bows

and inward again behind its stern like so many minnows in the presence of a kind of harmless and vegetarian whale. Steadily, with clock-like and deliberate precision, the long sickle-bar of the beacon swept inward from the lake, to vanish at the instant when the yellow eye came broadside on and apparently halted there with only a slow and terrific centrifugal movement within the eye itself until with that gigantic and soundless *flick!* the beam shot incredibly outward across the dark sky. But he did not see her, though presently one of the little skiffs came in and beached to take on another bootleg cargo of twenty-five-cent passengers and Jiggs got out.

"They are still fast to it," he said. "They thought they had it started once but something happened down there and when they hauled up all they had was the cable; they were even short the hook. They say now it must have hit on one of those big blocks of concrete and broke it loose and they both went down together only the ship got there first. They're going to send the diver down at daylight to see what to do. Only they don't want to use dynamite because even if it starts him back up it will bust the mole all to pieces. But they'll know to-morrow.—Didn't you want to call the paper at midnight or something?"

There was a pay-station in the lunch-wagon, on the wall. Since there was no booth the reporter had to talk into the telephone with his other ear plugged with his hand against the noise and again spending most of the time answering questions; when he turned away he saw that Jiggs was asleep on the backless stool, his arms folded on the counter and his forehead resting on them. It was quite warm inside, what with the constant frying of meat and with the human bodies with which the room was filled now long after its usual closing hour. The window facing the lake was fogged over so that the lighted scene beyond was one diffused glow such as might be shining behind falling snow; looking at it the reporter began to shake again, slowly and steadily inside the suit to which there was apparently no waistcoat, while there grew within him the first active sensation or impulse which he could remember since he watched Shumann begin to bank into the field pylon for the last time—a profound

reluctance to go out which acted not on his will but on his very muscles. He went to the counter; presently the proprietor saw him and took up one of the thick cups.

"Coffee?"

"No," the reporter said. "I want a coat. Overcoat. Have you got one you could lend me or rent me? I'm a reporter," he added. "I got to stick around down there at the beach until they get through."

"I ain't got a coat," the proprietor said. "But I got a piece of tarpaulin I keep my car under. You can use that if you will bring it back."

"All right," the reporter said. He did not disturb Jiggs; when he emerged into the cold and the dark this time he resembled a soiled and carelessly set-up tent. The tarpaulin was stiff and heavy to hold and presently heavy to carry too, but inside it he ceased to shake. It was well after midnight now and he had expected to find that the cars drawn up along the boulevard to face the lake would have thinned somewhat, but they had not. Individually they might have changed, but the ranked line was still intact—a silhouetted row of oval rear windows framing the motionless heads whose eyes, along with the headlights, stared with immobile and unmurmuring patience down upon the scene in which they were not even aware that nothing was happening—that the dredge squatted inactive now, attached as though by one steel umbilical cord not to one disaster but to the prime oblivious mother of all living and derelict too.

Steady and unflagging the long single spoke of the beacon swept its arc across the lake and vanished into the full broadside of the yellow eye and, already outshooting, swept on again, leaving that slow terrific vacuum in mind or sense which should have been filled with the flick and the swish which never came. The sight-seeing skiff had ceased to ply, perhaps having milked the business or perhaps having been stopped by authority; the next boat to land came direct from the dredge, one of the passengers the mechanic who had sat beside the woman in the lunch-wagon. This time the reporter did his own asking.

"No," the other said. "She went back to the field about an hour ago, when they found out they would have to wait for the diver. I'm going to turn in, myself. I guess you can knock off now yourself, can't you?"

"Yes," the reporter said. "I can knock off now too." At first he thought that perhaps he was going in, walking in the dry light treacherous shell-powder, holding the harsh stiff tarpaulin with both hands to ease the dead weight of it on his neck and shoulders; it was the weight he felt, the cold rasp of it on his fingers and palms. "I'll have to take it back first, like I promised," he thought. "If I don't now, I won't do it at all." The ramp of the boulevard rose here, so that the car-lights passed over his head and he walked now in comparative darkness where the sea-wall made its right angle with the boulevard. The wind did not reach here and since he could sit on the edge of the tarpaulin and fold it about him, knees and all, soon his body heated it inside like a tent. Now he did not have to watch the beacon sweep in from across the lake in its full arc except when the beam materialized slicing across the pie-shaped quarter of sky framed by the right angle of wall and ramp. It was the warmth; all of a sudden he had been telling Shumann for some time that she did not understand. And he knew that that was not right; all the while that he was telling Shumann he was also telling himself that that was not right. His cramped chin came up from the bony peaks of his knees; his feet were cold too or were probably cold because at first he did not feel them at all until they filled suddenly with the cold needles.

Now (the searchlight on the shore was black and only the one on the dredge stared as before downward into the water) the police-boat lay to and there was not one of the small boats in sight and he saw that most of the cars were gone too from the ramp overhead even while he was thinking that it could not possibly have been that long. But it had; the steady clock-like sweep flick! sweep, sweep flick! sweep of the beacon had accomplished something apparently, it had checked something off; as he looked upward the dark sea-wall overhead came into abrupt sharp relief and then simultaneous with the recognition of the

glow as floodlights he heard the displacing of air and then saw the navigation lights of the transport as it slid, quite low, across the black angle and on to the field. "That means it's after four o'clock," he thought. "That means it's to-morrow." It was not dawn yet though; before that he was trying to draw himself back as though by the arm while he was saying again to Shumann, "You see, it looks like I have just got to try to explain to somebody that she——" and jerked himself upward (he had not even leaned his head down to his knees this time and so had nowhere to jerk back to), the needles not needles now but actual ice and his mouth open as though it were not large enough to accommodate the air which his lungs required or the lungs not large enough to accommodate the air which his body had to have, and the long arm of the beacon sweeping athwart his gaze with a motion peremptory, ruthless and unhurried and already fading; it was some time even yet before he realized that it was not the beacon fading but the brightening sky.

The sun had risen before the diver went down and came up, and most of the cars were back by then too, ranked into the ubiquitous blue-and-drab rampart. The reporter had returned the tarpaulin; relieved of its stiff and chafing weight he now shook steadily in the pink chill of the first morning of the entire four days to be ushered in by no overcast. But he did not see her again at all. There was a somewhat larger crowd than there had been the evening before (it was Sunday, and there were now two police-launches and the number of skiffs and dories had trebled as though the first lot had spawned somewhere during the night) yet he had daylight to assist him now. But he did not see her. He saw Jiggs from a distance several times, but he did not see her; he did not even know that she had been to the beach again until after the diver came up and reported and he (the reporter) was climbing back towards the boulevard and the telephone and the parachute jumper called to him. The jumper came down the beach, not from the water but from the direction of the field, jerking savagely after him the injured leg from which he had burst the dressing and the fresh scab in making his jump yesterday.

"I was looking for you," he said. From his pocket he took a neatly folded sheaf of bills. "Roger said he owed you twenty-two dollars. Is that right?"

"Yes," the reporter said. The jumper held the money clipped between two fingers and folded over under his thumb.

"You got time to attend to some business for us or are you going to be busy?" he said.

"Busy?" the reporter said.

"Yes. Busy. If you are, say so, so I can find somebody else to do it."

"Yes," the reporter said. "I'll do it."

"You sure? If not, say so. It won't be much trouble; anybody can do it. I just thought of you because you seem to have already got yourself pretty well mixed up with us, and you will be here."

"Yes," the reporter said. "I'll do it."

"All right, then. We're going to get away to-day. No use hanging around here. Those bastards out there"—he jerked his head towards the lake, the clump of boats on the rosy water—"ain't going to get him out from under all that muck with just a handful of ropes. So we're going. What I want to do is leave some money with you in case they do . . . around out there and finally get him up."

"Yes," the reporter said. "I see." The jumper stared at him with that bleak tense quiet.

"Don't think I like to ask this any more than you like to hear it. But maybe you never sent for us to come here, and maybe we never asked you to move in on us: you'll have to admit that. Anyway, it's all done now; I can't help it any more than you can." The jumper's other hand came to the money; the reporter saw how the bills had already been separated carefully into two parts and that the part which the jumper extended towards him was clipped neatly with two paper clips beneath a strip of paper bearing a neatly printed address, a name which the reporter read at a glance because he had seen it before when he watched Shumann write it on the note. "Here's seventy-five bucks, and that's the address. I don't know what it will cost to ship him.

But if it is enough to ship him and still pay you your twenty-two bucks, do it. And if it ain't enough to pay you your twenty-two and still ship him, ship him and write me and I will send you the difference." This time the slip of paper came, folded, from his pocket. "This is mine. I kept them separate so you wouldn't get them mixed. Do you understand? Send him to the first address, the one with the money. And if there ain't enough left to pay you your twenty-two, write to me at the second one and I will send it to you. It may take some time for the letter to catch up with me, but I will get it sooner or later and I will send you the money. Understand?"

"Yes," the reporter said.

"All right. I asked you if you would attend to it and you said you would. But I didn't say anything about promise. Did I?"

"I promise," the reporter said.

"I don't want you to promise that. What I want you to promise is another thing. Something else. Don't think I want to ask it; I told you that; I don't want to ask it any more than you want to hear it. What I want you to promise is, don't send him collect."

"I promise," the reporter said.

"All right. Call it a gamble on your twenty-two dollars, if you want to. But not collect. The seventy-five may not be enough. But all we got now is my nineteen-fifty from yesterday and the prize-money from Thursday. That was a hundred and four. So I can't spare more than seventy-five. You'll have to chance it. If the seventy-five won't ship him ho—— to that address I gave you, you can do either of two things. You can pay the difference yourself and write me and I will send you the difference and your twenty-two. Or if you don't want to take a chance on me, use the seventy-five to bury him here; there must be some way you can do it so they can find him later if they want to. But don't send him collect. I am not asking you to promise to put out any money of your own to send him back; I am just asking you to promise not to leave it so they will have to pay him out of the freight or the express office. Will you?"

"Yes," the reporter said. "I promise."

"All right," the jumper said. He put the money into the reporter's hand. "Thanks. I guess we will leave to-day. So I guess I will tell you good-bye." He looked at the reporter, bleak, his face spent with sleeplessness too, standing with the injured leg propped stiffly in the shell-dust. "She took a couple of big drinks and she is asleep now." He looked at the reporter with that bleak speculation which seemed to be almost clairvoyant. "Don't take it too hard. You never made him try to fly that crate any more than you could have kept him from it. No man will hold that against you, and what she might hold against you won't hurt you because you won't ever see her again, see?"

"Yes," the reporter said. "That's true."

"Yair. So sometime when she is feeling better about it I will tell her how you attended to this and she will be obliged to you, and for the rest of it too. Only take a tip from me and stick to the kind of people you are used to after this."

"Yes," the reporter said.

"Yair." The jumper moved, shifting the injured leg stiffly to turn, then he paused again, looking back. "You got my address; it may take some time for the letter to catch up with me. But you will get your money. Well——" He extended his hand; it was hard, not clammy, just absolutely without warmth. "Thanks for attending to this and for trying to help us out. Be good to yourself." Then he was gone, limping savagely away. The reporter did not watch him; after awhile it was one of the soldiers who called him and showed him the gap in the barricade.

"Better put that stuff into your pocket, doc," the soldier said. "Some of these guys will be cutting your wrist off." The cab, the taxi, ran with the sun, yet a ray of it fell through the back window and glinted on a chromium fitting on the collapsible seat, and though after awhile the reporter gave up trying to move the seat and finally thought of laying his hat over the light-point, he still continued to try to blink away that sensation of light fine sand inside his lids. It didn't matter whether he watched the backward-streaming wall of moss and live oaks above the dark water-glints or whether he tried to keep vision, sight, inside the cab. As soon as he closed them he would find

himself, out of some attenuation of weariness, sleeplessness, confusing both the living and the dead without concern now, with profound conviction of the complete unimportance of either or of the confusion itself, trying with that mindless and unflagging optimism to explain to someone that she did not understand and now without bothering to decide or care whether or not and why or not he was asleep.

The cab did not have to go as far up as Grandlieu Street and so the reporter did not see a clock, though by the position of the balcony's shadow across the door beneath it he guessed it to be about nine. In the corridor he quit blinking, and on the stairs too; but no sooner had he entered the room with the sun coming into the windows and falling across the bright savage bars of the blanket on the cot (even the other blankets on the walls, which the sun did not reach, seemed to have confiscated light into their harsh red-white-and-black lightnings which they released slowly into the room as other blankets might have soaked up and then emitted the smell of horses) he began to blink again, with that intent myopic bemusement. He seemed to await the office of something outside himself before he moved and closed the jalousies before the window. It was better then because for awhile he could not see at all; he just stood there in some ultimate distillation of the savage, bright, near-tropical day, not knowing now whether he was still blinking or not, in an implacable infiltration which not even walls could stop. He came from the circumambient breathing of fish and coffee and fruit and hemp and swamp land dyked away from the stream because of which they came to exist, so that the very commerce-bearing units of their breath and life came and went not beside or among them but above them like straying skyscrapers putting in from and out to the sea. There was even less light beyond the curtain, though it was not completely dark. "How could it be," he thought, standing quietly with his coat in one hand and the other already slipping the knot of his tie, thinking how no place where a man has lived for almost two years or even two weeks or even two days is completely dark to him unless he has got so fat in the senses that he

is already dead walking and breathing and all places are dark to him even in sunlight. It was not completely dark but just enough so that now the room's last long instant of illimitable unforgetting seemed to draw in quietly in a long immobility of fleeing, with a quality poised and imminent but which could not be called waiting and which contained nothing in particular of farewell, but just paused unbreathing and without impatience and incurious, for him to make the move. His hand was already on the light, the switch.

He had just finished shaving when Jiggs began to call his name from the alley. He took from the bed in passing the fresh shirt which he had laid out, and went to the window and opened the jalousie. "It's on the latch," he said. "Come on in." He was buttoning the shirt when Jiggs mounted the stairs, carrying the canvas sack, wearing the tennis shoes and the boot legs.

"Well, I guess you have heard the news," Jiggs said.

"Yes. I saw Holmes before I came to town. So I guess you'll all be moving now."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "I'm going with Art Jackson. He's been after me a good while. He's got the chutes, see, and I have done some exhibition jumping and so it won't take me long to pick up free jumping, delayed. . . . Then we can split the whole twenty-five bucks between ourselves. But Jesus, it won't be like racing. Maybe I'll go back to racing after awhile, after I have . . . " He stood motionless in the centre of the room, holding the dragging canvas bag, the battered brutal face lowered and sober and painfully bemused. Then the reporter discovered what he was looking at. "Jesus," Jiggs said, "I tried again to put them on this morning and I couldn't even seem to open the bag and take them out." That was about ten o'clock because almost immediately the negress Leonora came in, in her coat and hat, and carrying the neat basket beneath its neat cloth so fresh that the ironed creases were still visible. But the reporter only allowed her to put the basket down.

"A bottle of wood alcohol and a can of that stuff you take grease out of clothes with," he told her, giving her the bill; then to Jiggs: "What do you want to fix that scratch with?"

"I got something for that," Jiggs said. "I brought that with me." He took it from the bag—a coca cola bottle stoppered with paper and containing wing-dope. The negress left the basket and went out and returned with the two bottles, made a pot of coffee and set it with cups and sugar on the table. Then she looked again about the untouched, unused rooms, took up the basket and stood for a while and watched what they were doing with prim and grim inscrutability before departing for good. And the reporter too, sitting on the couch and blowing quietly into his cup to cool it, watched Jiggs squatting before the two gleaming boots, in the tight soiled clothes and the tennis shoes now upturned behind him, and he thought how never before had he ever heard of rubber soles wearing through. "Because what the hell do I need with a pair of new boots for Christ's sake, when probably this time next month I won't even have on anything to stuff into the tops of them?" Jiggs said. That stale cup between his hands, the reporter had watched Jiggs remove the polish from the boots, first with the alcohol, watching the cold dark flowing of the liquid move, already fading, up the length of each boot like the shadow of a cloud travelling along a road, and then by scraping them with the back of a knife-blade, so that at last the boots had returned to the mere shape of what they were, like the blank gunstocks manufactured for sale to fire-arms amateurs. He watched Jiggs, sitting on the couch now and with the soiled shirt for padding and the inverted boot clamped between his knees, remove delicately from the sole with sandpaper all trace of contact with the earth; and last of all, intent, his blunt grained hands, moving with minute and incredible lightness and care, begin to fill in with the wing-dope the heel-mark on the right boot's instep so that presently it was invisible to the casual glance of anyone who did not know that it had been there. "Jesus," Jiggs said, "if I only hadn't walked in them. Just hadn't creased them at the ankle. But maybe after I get them rubbed smooth again———" But when the cathedral clock struck one they had not accomplished that. Rubbing only smoothed them and left them without life; the reporter suggested floor-wax and went out and got it, and it had to be removed.

"Wait," he said, looking at Jiggs, the gaunt face worn with fatigue and lack of sleep and filled with a spent unflagging expression of quiet endurance like a hypnotized person. "Listen. That magazine with the pictures of what you wish you could get your white American servants to wear so you could think they were English butlers, and what if you wore yourself maybe the horse would think he was in England too unless the fox happened to run under a billboard or something . . . About how a fox's tail is the only . . ." He stared at Jiggs, who stared back at him with blinking and one-eyed attention. "Wait. No. It's the horse's bone. Not the fox; the horse's shin-bone. That's what we need."

"A horse's shin-bone?"

"For the boots. That's what you use."

"All right. But where——"

"I know where. We can pick it up on the way out to see Hagood. We can rent a car." They had to walk up to Grandlieu Street to rent the car.

"Want me to drive?" Jiggs said.

"Can you?"

"Sure."

"Then I guess you will have to," the reporter said. "I can't." It was a bright, soft, sunny day, quite warm, the air filled, breathing, with a faint suspiration which made the reporter think of organs and bells—of mortification and peace and shadowy kneeling—though he heard neither. The streets were crowded, though the throngs were quiet, not only with ordinary Sunday decorum but with a certain slow tranquillity as though the very brick and stone had just recovered from fever. Now and then, in the lees of walls and gutters as they left down town behind them, the reporter saw little drifts of the spent confetti but soiled and stained now until it resembled more dingy sawdust or even dead leaves. Once or twice he saw tattered loops of the purple-and-gold bunting and once at a corner a little boy darted almost beneath the wheels with a tattered streamer of it whipping behind him. Then the city dissolved into swamp and marsh again; presently the road ran into a broad expanse of

saltmarsh broken by the dazzling sun-blanched dyke of a canal; presently a rutted lane turned off into the saltgrass. "Here we are," the reporter said. The car turned into the lane and they began to pass the débris, the silent imperishable monument tranquil in the bright sun—the old car-bodies without engines or wheels, the old engines and wheels without bodies; the rusted scraps and sections of iron machinery and standpipes and culverts rising half-buried out of the blanched sand and shell-dust which was so white itself that for a time Jiggs saw no bones at all. "Can you tell a horse from a cow?" the reporter said.

"I don't know," Jiggs said. "I ain't very certain whether I can even tell a shin-bone or not."

"We'll get some of everything and try them all," the reporter said. So they did; moving about, stooping (the reporter was blinking again now between the fierce quiet glare of the pigmentless sand and the ineffable and cloudless blue), they gathered up about thirty pounds of bones. They had two complete forelegs, both of which were horses' though they did not know it, a set of shoulder-blades from a mule, and Jiggs came up with a full set of ribs which he insisted belonged to a colt but which were actually those of a big dog, and the reporter had one object which turned out not to be bone at all but the forearm from a piece of statuary. "We ought to have something in here that will do," he said.

"Yair," Jiggs said. "Now which way?" They did not need to return through the city. They skirted it, leaving the saltmarsh behind and now, crossing no actual boundary or demarcation and challenged by no sentry, they entered a region where even the sunlight seemed different, where it filtered among the ordered live oaks and fell suavely upon parked expanses and vistas beyond which the homes of the rich, oblivious and secure, presided above clipped lawns and terraces, with a quality of having itself been passed by appointment through a walled gate by a watchman. Presently they ran along a picket-line of palm-trunks beyond which a clipped fairway stretched, broken only by sedate groups of apparently armed men and boys all moving in

one direction like a kind of decorously embattled skirmish advance.

"It ain't four yet," the reporter said. "We can wait for him right here, at number fifteen." So after a time Hagood, preparing to drive with his foursome, his ball teed and addressed, looked up and saw them standing quietly just inside the club's grounds, the car waiting in the road behind them, watching him—the indefatigable and now ubiquitous cadaver and the other, the vicious half-metamorphosis between thug and horse—the tough, hard, blunt face to which the blue swollen eye lent no quality of pity or suffering, made it look not at all like a victim or one deserving compassion, but merely like a pirate. Hagood stepped down from the tee.

"A message from the office," he said quietly. "You fellows drive and play on; I'll catch you." He approached Jiggs and the reporter. "How much do you want this time?" he said.

"Whatever you will let me have," the reporter said.

"So," Hagood said quietly. "It's that bad this time, is it?" The reporter said nothing; they watched Hagood take his wallet from his hip-pocket and open it. "This is the last, this time, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes," the reporter said. "They're leaving to-night." From the wallet Hagood took a thin sheaf of cheque blanks.

"So you won't suggest a sum yourself," Hagood said. "You are using psychology on me."

"Whatever you can. Will. I know I have borrowed more from you than I have paid back. But this time maybe I can . . ." He drew something from his coat now and extended it—a postcard, a coloured lithograph; Hagood read the legend: *Hotel Vista del Mar, Santa Monica, California*, the plump arrow drawn by a hotel pen and pointing to a window.

"What?" Hagood said.

"Read it," the reporter said. "It's from mamma. Where they are spending their honeymoon, her and Mr. Hurtz. She said how she has told him about me and he seems to like me all right and that maybe when my birthday comes on the first of April. . ."

"Ah," Hagood said. "That will be very nice, won't it?" He took a short fountain-pen from his shirt and glanced about; now the second man, the cartoon comedy centaur who had been watching him quietly and steadily with the one bright hot eye, spoke for the first time.

"Write on my back if you want to, mister," he said, turning and stooping, presenting a broad skin-tight expanse of soiled shirt, apparently as hard as a section of concrete, to Hagood.

"And get the hell kicked out of me and serve me right," Hagood thought viciously. He spread the blank on Jiggs' back and wrote the cheque and waved it dry and folded it and handed it to the reporter.

"Do you want me to sign anyth——" the reporter began.

"No. But will you let me ask a favour of you?"

"Yes, chief. Of course."

"Go to town and look in the book and find where Doctor Legendre lives and go out there. Don't telephone; go out there; tell him I sent you, tell him I said to give you some pills that will put you to sleep for about twenty-four hours, and go home and take them. Will you?"

"Yes, chief," the reporter said. "To-morrow when you fix the note for me to sign you can pin the postcard to it. It won't be legal, but it will be . . ."

"Yes," Hagood said. "Go on, now. Please go on."

"Yes, chief," the reporter said. They went on. When they reached home it was almost five o'clock. They unloaded the bones and now they both worked, each with a boot, fast. It seemed to be slow work, nevertheless the boots were taking on a patina deeper and less brilliant than wax or polish.

"Jesus," Jiggs said. "If I just hadn't creased the ankles, and if I just had kept the box and paper when I unwrapped them——" Because he had forgotten that it was Sunday. He knew it; he and the reporter had known it was Sunday all day but they had both forgotten it; they did not remember it until, at half-past five, Jiggs halted the car before the window into which he had looked four days ago—the window from which now both boots and photographs were missing. They looked at the locked door

quietly for a good while. "So we didn't need to hurry after all," he said. "Well, maybe I couldn't have fooled them, anyway. Maybe I'd a had to went to the pawnshop just the same anyway. . . . We might as well take the car back."

"Let's go to the paper and cash the cheque first," the reporter said. He had not yet looked at it; while Jiggs waited in the car he went in and returned. "It was for a hundred," he said. "He's a good guy. He's been white to me, Jesus." He got into the car.

"Now where?" Jiggs said.

"Now we got to decide now. We might as well take the car back while we are deciding." The lights were on now; when they emerged from the garage, walking, they moved in red-green-and-white glare and flicker, crossing the outfall from the theatre entrances and the eating-places, passing athwart the hour's rich resurgence of fish and coffee. "You can't give it to her yourself," the reporter said. "They would know you never had that much."

"Yair," Jiggs said. "All I could risk would have been that twenty bucks. But I'll have room for some of it, though. If I get as much as ten from Uncle Isaac I will want to pinch myself."

"And if we slipped it to the kid, it would be the—— Wait," he said: he stopped and looked at Jiggs. "I got it. Yair. Come on." Now he was almost running, weaving on through the slow Sunday-evening throng, Jiggs following. They tried five drugstores before they found it—a blue-and-yellow toy hanging by a piece of cord before a rotary ventilator in similitude of flight. It had not been for sale; Jiggs and the reporter fetched the step-ladder from the rear of the store in order to take it down. "You said the train leaves at eight," the reporter said. "We got to hurry some." It was half-past six now as they left Grandlieu Street; when they reached the corner where Shumann and Jiggs had bought the sandwich two nights ago, they parted.

"I can see the balls from here," Jiggs said. "Ain't any need of you going with me; I guess I won't have any trouble carrying what they will give me for them. You get the sandwiches and

leave the door unlocked for me." He went on, the newspaper-wrapped boots under his arm; even now as each foot flicked backward with that motion like a horse's hock, the reporter believed that he could see the coin-shaped patch of blackened flesh in each pale sole: so that when he entered the corridor and set the door ajar, and mounted the stairs and turned on the light, he did not open the sandwiches at once. He put them and the toy aeroplane on the table and went beyond the curtain. When he emerged he carried in one hand the gallon jug (it contained now about three pints) and in the other a pair of shoes which looked as much like him as his hair or hands looked. He was sitting on the cot, smoking, when Jiggs entered, carrying now a biggish bundle, a bundle bigger even though shorter than the boots had been. "He gave me five bucks for them," Jiggs said. "I give twenty-two and a half and wear them twice and he gives me five. Yair. He throws it away." He laid the bundle on the couch. "So I decided that wasn't even worth the trouble of handing to her. So I just got some presents for all of them." He opened the parcel. It contained a box or chest of candy about the size of a suitcase and resembling a miniature bale of cotton lettered heavily by some pyrographic process: *Souvenir of New Valois. Come back again* and three magazines—*Boys' Life, The Ladies' Home Journal,* and one of the pulp magazines of war stories in the air. Jiggs' blunt grained hands rifled them and evened the edges again; his brutal battered face was curiously serene. "It will give them something to do on the train, see? Now let me get my pliers and we will fix that ship." Then he saw the jug on the table as he turned. But he did not go to it; he just stopped, looking at it, and the reporter saw the good eye rush sudden and inarticulate and hot. But he did not move. It was the reporter who went and poured the first drink and gave it to him, and then the second one. "You need one too," Jiggs said.

"Yes," the reporter said. "I will in a minute." But he didn't for awhile, though he took one of the sandwiches when Jiggs opened them and then watched Jiggs, his jaw bulged by a huge bite, stoop and take from the canvas sack the cigar box and from

the box produce a pair of pliers; not beginning yet to eat his own sandwich the reporter watched Jiggs raise the metal clamps which held the toy aeroplane's tin body together and open it. The reporter produced the money—the seventy-five which the jumper had given him and the hundred from Hagood—and they wedged it into the toy and Jiggs clamped it to again.

"Yair, he'll find it, all right," Jiggs said. "Every toy he gets he plays with it a couple of days and then he takes it apart. To fix it, he says. But Jesus, he came by that natural; Roger's old man is a doctor, see. A little country town where it's mostly Swede farmers and the old man gets up at any hour of the night and rides twenty or thirty miles in a sleigh and borns the babies and cuts off arms and legs and a lot of them even pay him; sometimes it ain't but a couple or three years before they will bring him in a ham or a bedspread or something on the instalment. So the old man wanted Roger to be a doctor too, see, and he was hammering that at Roger all the time Roger was a kid and watching Roger's grades in school and all: so that Roger would have to doctor up his report cards for the old man but the old man never found it out; he would see Roger start off for school every morning over in town (they lived in a kind of big place, half farm, a little ways out of town that never nobody tried to farm much, Roger said, but his old man kept it because it was where his old man, his father's old man, had settled when he come into the country) and he never found it out until one day he found out how Roger hadn't even been inside the school in six months because he hadn't never been off the place any further than out of sight down the road where he could turn and come back through the woods to an old mill his grandfather had built; and Roger had built him a motor-cycle in it out of scraps saved up from mowing-machines and clocks and such, and it run, see? That's what saved him. When his old man saw that it would run he let Roger go then and quit worrying him to be a doctor; he bought Roger the first ship, the Hisso Standard, with the money he had been saving up to send Roger to the medical school, but when he saw that the motor-cycle would run, I guess he knew he was whipped. And then one night Roger had to make

a landing without any lights and he run over a cow and cracked it up and the old man paid for having it rebuilt; Roger told me once the old man must have borrowed the jack to do it with on the farm and that he aimed to pay his old man back the first thing as soon as he could but I guess it's O.K. because a farm without a mortgage on it would probably be against the law or something. Or maybe the old man didn't have to mortgage the farm but he just told Roger that so Roger would pick out a vacant field next time." The cathedral clock had struck seven shortly after Jiggs came in with his bundle; it must be about half-past seven now. Jiggs squatted, holding one of the shoes in his hand. "Jesus," he said. "I sure won't say I don't need them. But what about you?"

"I couldn't wear but one pair of them, no matter how many I had," the reporter said. "You better go ahead and try them on."

"They'll fit, all right. There are two garments that will fit anybody: a handkerchief when your nose is running and a pair of shoes when your feet are on the ground."

"Yes," the reporter said. "That was the same ship that he and Laverne——"

"Yair. Jesus, they were a pair. She was glad to see him when he come into town that day in it. One day she told me something about it. She was an orphan, see; her older sister that was married sent for her to come live with them when her folks died. The sister was about twenty years older than Laverne and the sister's husband was about six or eight years younger than the sister and Laverne was about fourteen or fifteen; she hadn't had much fun at home with a couple of old people like her father and mother, and she never had much with her sister neither, being that much younger; yair, I don't guess the sister had a whole lot of fun either with the kind of guy the husband seemed to be. So when the husband started teaching Laverne how to slip out and meet him and they would drive to some town forty or fifty miles away when the husband was supposed to be at work or something and he would buy her a glass of soda-water or maybe stop at a dive where the husband was sure nobody he knowed

would see them and dance, I guess she thought that was all the fun there was in the world and that since he would tell her it was all right to twotime the sister that way, that it was all right for her to do the rest of it he wanted. Because he was the big guy, see, the one that paid for what she wore and what she ate. Or maybe she didn't think it was all right so much as she just thought that that was the way it was—that you was either married and wore down with housework to where your husband was just the guy that twotimed you and you knew it and all you could do about it was nag at him while he was awake and go through his clothes while he was alseep to see if you found any hairpins or letters or rubbers in his pockets, and then cry and moan about him to your younger sister while he was gone; or you were the one that somebody else's husband was easing out with and that all the choice you had was the dirty dishes to wash against the nickel sodas and a half an hour of dancing to a back-alley orchestra in a dive where nobody give his right name and then being wallowed around on the back seat of a car and then go home and slip in and lie to your sister and when it got too close, having the guy jump on you too to save his own face and then make it up by buying you two sodas next time. Or maybe at fifteen she just never saw any way of doing better because for awhile she never even knowed that the guy was holding her down himself, see, that he was hiding her out at the cheapdives not so they would not be recognized but so he would not have any competition from anybody but guys like himself; no young guys for her to see or to see her. Only the competition come; somehow she found out there was sodas that cost more than a dime and that all the music never had to be played in a back room with the shades down. Or maybe it was just him, because one night she had used him for a stalking horse and he hunted her down and the guy she was with this time finally had to beat him up and so he went back home and told the sister on her——" The reporter rose, quickly. Jiggs watched him go to the table and pour into the glass, splashing the liquor on to the table. "That's right," Jiggs said. "Take a good one." The reporter lifted the glass, gulping, his throat filled with swallowing and

the liquor cascading down his chin; Jiggs sprang up quickly too but the other passed him, running towards the window and on to the balcony where Jiggs, following, caught him by the arms as he lunged outwards and the liquor, hardly warmed, burst from his mouth. The cathedral clock struck the half-hour; the sound followed them back into the room and seemed to die away too, like the light, into the harsh, bright, savage zigzags of colour on the blanket-hung walls. "Let me get you some water," Jiggs said. "You sit down now, and I will——"

"I'm all right now," the reporter said. "You put on your shoes. That was half-past seven then."

"Yair. But you better——"

"No. Sit down; I'll pull your leggings for you."

"You sure you feel like it?"

"Yes. I'm all right now." They sat facing one another on the floor again as they had sat the first night, while the reporter took hold of the riveted strap of the right boot leg. Then he began to laugh. "You see, it got all mixed up," he said, laughing, not loud yet. "It started out to be a tragedy. A good orthodox Italian tragedy. You know: one Florentine falls in love with another Florentine's wife and he spends three acts fixing it up to put the bee on the second Florentine and so just as the curtain falls on the third act the Florentine and the wife crawl down the fire escape and you know that the second Florentine's brother won't catch them until daylight and they will be asleep in the monk's bed in the monastery? But it went wrong. When he come climbing up to the window to tell her the horses was ready, she refused to speak to him. It turned into a comedy, see?" He looked at Jiggs, laughing, not laughing louder but just faster.

"Here, fellow!" Jiggs said. "Here now! Quit it!"

"Yes," the reporter said. "It's not that funny. I'm trying to quit it. I'm trying to. But I can't quit. See? See how I can't quit?" he said, still holding to the strap, his face twisted with laughing, which as Jiggs looked, burst suddenly with drops of moisture running down the cadaverous grimace which for an instant Jiggs thought was sweat until he saw the reporter's eyes.

It was after half-past seven; they would have to hurry now.

But they found a cab at once and they got the green light at once at Grandlieu Street even before the cab began to slow, shooting athwart the glare of neon, the pulse and glitter of electrics which bathed the idle slow Sunday pavement throng as it drifted from window to window beyond which the immaculate, the unbelievable wax men and women gazed back at them with expressions inscrutable and delphic. Then the palms in Saint Jules Avenue began to swim and flee past—the scabby picket posts, the sage dusters out of the old Southern country thought; the lighted clock in the station façade said six minutes to eight.

"They are probably already on the train," Jiggs said.

"Yes," the reporter said. "They'll let you through the gate, though."

"Yair," Jiggs said, taking up the toy aeroplane and the package which he had rewrapped. "Don't you want to come inside?"

"I'll just wait here," the reporter said. He watched Jiggs enter the waiting-room and vanish. He could hear the announcer calling another train; moving towards the doors he could see passengers begin to rise and take up bags and bundles and move towards the numbered gates, though quite a few still remained for other trains. "But not long," the reporter thought. "Because they can go home now"; thinking of all the names of places which railroads go to, fanning out from the River's mouth to all of America; of the cold February names: Minnesota and Dakota and Michigan, the high ice-clad river reaches and the long dependable snow; "yair, home now, knowing that they have got almost a whole year before they will have to get drunk and celebrate the fact that they will have more than eleven months before they will have to wear masks and get drunk and blow horns again."

Now the clock said two minutes to eight; they had probably got off the car to talk to Jiggs, perhaps standing now on the platform, smoking maybe; he could cross the waiting-room and doubtless even see them, standing beside the hissing train while the other passengers and the redcaps hurried past; she would

carry the bundle and the magazines and the little boy would have the aeroplane already, probably performing wing-overs or vertical turns by hand. "Maybe I will go and look," he thought, waiting to see if he would, until suddenly he realized that now it was different from when he had stood in the bedroom before turning on the light. It was himself now who was the nebulous and quiet ragtag and bobend of touching and breath and experience without visible scars, the waiting incurious unbreathing and without impatience, and there was another save him this time to make the move. There was a second hand on the clock too—a thin spidery splash; he watched it now as it moved too fast to follow save between the intervals of motion when it became instantaneously immobile as though drawn across the clock's face by a pen and a ruler—9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. and done; it was now the twenty-first hour, and that was all. No sound, as though it had not been a steam train which quitted the station two seconds ago but rather the shadow of one on a magic-lantern screen until the child's vagrant and restless hand came and removed the slide.

"Well," Jiggs said, "I guess you'll be wanting to get home and catch some shuteye."

"Yair," the reporter said, "we might as well be moving." They got into the cab, though this time Jiggs lifted the canvas sack from the floor and sat with it on his lap.

"Yair," Jiggs said. "He'll find it. He already dropped it a couple of times trying to make it spin on the platform.—You told him to stop at Main Street, didn't you?"

"I'll take you on to the hotel," the reporter said.

"No, I'll get out at Main. Jesus, it's a good thing I don't live here; I never would get back home unless somebody took me; I couldn't even remember the name of the street I lived on even if I could pronounce it to ask where it was."

"Grandlieu," the reporter said. "I will take you——" The cab slowed into the corner and stopped; Jiggs gathered up the canvas bag and opened the door.

"This'll be fine. It ain't but eight-fifteen; I ain't to meet Art until nine. I'll just walk up the street a ways and get a little air."

"I wish you'd let me—— Or if you'd like to come on back home and——"

"No; you get on home and go to bed; we have kept you up enough, I guess." He leaned into the cab, the cap raked above his hard blue face and the violent plum-coloured eye; suddenly the light changed to green and the bell clanged and shrilled. Jiggs stuck out his hand; for an instant the hot hard limp rough palm sweated against the reporter's as if the reporter had touched a piece of machinery belting. "Much obliged. And thanks for the drinks. I'll be seeing you." The cab moved; Jiggs banged the door; his face fled backward past the window; the green and red and white electrics waned and pulsed and flicked away too as through the rear window the reporter watched Jiggs swing the now limp dirty sack over his shoulder and turn on into the crowd. The reporter leaned forward and tapped on the glass.

"Out to the airport," he said.

"Airport?" the driver said. "I thought the other fellow said you wanted to go to Noyades Street."

"No; airport," the reporter said. The driver looked forward again; he seemed to settle himself, to shape his limbs for comfort for the long haul even while the one-way arrows of the old constricted city flicked past. But presently the old quarter gave way to out-ravelling and shabby purlieus, mostly lightless now, and the cab went faster; presently the street straightened and became the ribbon-straight road running across the terraqueous plain and the cab was going quite fast, and now the illusion began, the sense of being suspended in a small airtight glass box clinging by two puny fingers of light in the silent and rushing immensity of space. By looking back he could still see the city, the glare of it, no further away; if he were moving, regardless at what terrific speed and in what loneliness, so was it, paralleling him. He was not escaping it; symbolic and encompassing, it outlay all gasoline-spanned distances and all clock- or sun-stipulated destinations. It would be there—the eternal smell of the coffee the sugar the hemp sweating slow iron plates above the forked deliberate brown water and lost

lost lost all ultimate blue of latitude and horizon; the hot rain gutterful plaiting the eaten heads of shrimp; the ten thousand inescapable mornings wherein ten thousand swinging airplants stippleprop the soft scrofulous soaring of sweating brick and ten thousand pairs of splayed brown hired Leonora feet tiger-barred by jaloused armistice with the invincible sun: the thin black coffee, the myriad fish stewed in a myriad oil—to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow; not only not to hope, not even to wait: just to endure.

The Scavengers

AT MIDNIGHT—one of the group of newspaper men on the beach claimed to have watched the mate of the dredge-boat and the sergeant of the police-launch holding flashlights on their watches for fifteen minutes . . . the dredge upped anchor and stood off shore and steamed away while the police-launch, faster, had taken its white bone almost beyond the sea-wall before the dredge had got enough offing to turn. Then the five newspaper men—four in overcoats with upturned collars—turned too and mounted the beach towards where the ranked glaring cars were beginning to disperse while the policemen—there were not so many of them now—tried to forestall the inevitable jam. There was no wind to-night, neither was there any overcast. The necklace of lights along the lake shore curved away faint and clear, with that illusion of tremulous wavering which distance and clarity gave them, like bright not-quite-settled roosting birds, as did the boundary lights along the sea-wall; and now the steady and measured rake of the beacon seemed not to travel so much as to murmur like a moving fore-foot of wind across the water, among the thick faint stars. They mounted the beach to where a policeman, hands on hips, stood as though silhouetted not against the criss-crossing of headlights but against the blatting and honking uproar as well, as though contemplating without any emotion whatever the consummation of that which he had been waiting on for twenty hours now. "Ain't you talking to us too, sergeant?" the first newspaper man said. The policeman looked back over his shoulder, squinting down at the group from under his raked cap.

"Who are you?" he said.

"We are the press," the other said in a smirking affected voice.

"Get on, get on," a second said behind him. "Let's get indoors somewhere." The policeman had already turned back to the cars, the racing engines, the honking and blatting.

"Come, come, sergeant," the first said. "Come come come come. Ain't you going to send us back to town too?" The policeman did not even look back. "Well, won't you at least call my wife and tell her you won't make me come home, since you wear the dark blue of honour integrity and purity——" The policeman spoke without turning his head.

"Do you want to finish this wake out here or do you really want to finish it in the wagon?"

"Ex-actly. You have got the idea at last. Boys, he's even com——"

"Get on, get on," the second said. "Let him buy a paper and read it." They went on, the reporter (he was the one without an overcoat) last, threading their way between the blatting and honking, the whining and clashing of gears, the glare of back-bouncing and crossing headlight beams, and reached the boulevard and crossed it towards the lunch-stand. The first led the way in, his hat-brim crumpled on one side and his overcoat caught one button awry and a bottle neck protruding from one pocket. The proprietor looked up at them with no especial pleasure; he was about to close up.

"That fellow out there kept me up all last night and I am about wore out," he said.

"You would think we were from the District Attorney's office and trying to padlock him instead of a press delegation trying to persuade him to stay open and accept our pittances," the first said. "You are going to miss the big show at daylight, let alone all the country trade that never heard about it until the noon train got in with the papers."

"How about coming to the back room and letting me lock the door and turn out the lights up here, then?" the proprietor said.

"Sure," they told him. So he locked up and turned off the lights and led them to the back, to the kitchen—a stove, a zinc table encrusted with week-end after week-end of slain meat and fish—and supplied them with glasses, bottles of coca cola, a deck

of cards, beer-cases to sit on, and a barrel head for table, and prepared to retire.

"If anybody knocks, just sit quiet," he said. "And you can beat on that wall there when they get ready to begin; I'll wake up."

"Sure," they told him. He went out. The first opened the bottle and began to pour into the five glasses. The reporter stopped him.

"None for me. I'm not drinking."

"What?" the first said. He set the bottle carefully down and took out his handkerchief and went through the pantomime of removing his glasses, polishing them, and replacing them and staring at the reporter, though before he had finished the fourth took up the bottle and finished pouring the drinks. "You what?" the first said. "Did I hear my ears, or was it just blind hope I heard?"

"Yes," the reporter said; his face wore that faint, spent, aching expression which a man might wear towards the end of a private baby show, "I've quit for a while."

"Thank God for that," the first breathed, then he turned and began to scream at the one who now held the bottle, with that burlesque outrage and despair of the spontaneous amateur buffoon. But he ceased at once and then the four of them (again the reporter declined) sat about the barrel and began to deal blackjack. The reporter did not join them. He drew his beer-case aside, whereupon the first, the habitual opportunist who must depend upon all unrehearsed blundering and recalcitrant circumstance to be his stooge, noticed at once that he had set his beer-case beside the now cold stove. "If you ain't going to take the drink yourself maybe you better give the stove one," he said.

"I'll begin to warm up in a minute," the reporter said. They played; the fourth had the deal; their voices came quiet and brisk and impersonal above the faint slapping of the cards.

"That's what I call a guy putting himself away for keeps," he said.

"What do you suppose he was thinking about while he was sitting up there waiting for that water to smack him?" the first said.

"Nothing," the second said shortly. "If he had been a man that thought, he would not have been up there in the first place."

"Meaning he would have had a good job on a newspaper, huh?" the first said.

"Yes," the second said. "That's what I mean." The reporter rose quietly. He lit a cigarette, his back turned a little to them, and dropped the match carefully into the cold stove and sat down again. None of the others appeared to have noticed him.

"While you are supposing," the fourth said, "what do you suppose his wife was thinking about?"

"That's easy," the first said. "She was thinking, 'Thank God I carry a spare.' " They did not laugh; the reporter heard no sound of laughter, sitting quiet and immobile on his beer-case while the cigarette smoke lifted in the unwinded stale air and broke about his face, streaming on, and the voices spoke back and forth with a sort of brisk dead slap-slap-slap like that of the cards.

"Do you suppose it's a fact that they were both laying her?" the third said.

"That's not news," the first said. "But how about the fact that Shumann knew it too? Some of these mechanics that have known them for some time say they don't even know who the kid belongs to."

"Maybe both," the fourth said. "A dual personality: the flying Jekyll and Hyde brother, who flies the ship and makes the parachute jump all at once."

The reporter did not move, only his hand, the arm bending at the elbow which rested upon his knee, rose with the cigarette to his mouth and became motionless again while he drew in the smoke with an outward aspect of intense bemused concentration, trembling quietly and steadily and apparently not only untroubled by it but not even aware of it, like a man who has had palsy for years and years; the voices might have indeed been the sound of the cards or perhaps leaves blowing past him.

"You bastards," the second said. "You dirty-mouthed bastards. Why don't you let the guy rest? Let them all rest. They were trying to do what they had to do, with what they had to do it with, the same as all of us only maybe a little better than us. At least without squealing and belly-aching."

"Sure," the first said. "You get the point exactly. What they could do, with what they had to do it with: that's just what we were talking about when you called us dirty-minded bastards."

"Yes," the third said. "Grady's right. Let him rest; that's what she seems to have done herself. But what the hell: probably nowhere to send him, even if she had him out of there. So it would be the same whether she stayed any longer or not, besides the cost. Where do you suppose they are going?"

"Where do people like that go?" the second said. "Where do mules and vaudeville acts go? You see a wagon broken down in the ditch or you see one of those trick bicycles with one wheel and the seat fourteen feet from the earth in a pawnshop. But do you wonder whatever became of whatever it was that used to make them move?"

"Do you mean you think she cleared out just to keep from having to pay out some jack to bury him if they get him up?" the fourth said.

"Why not?" the second said. "People like that don't have money to spend on corpses because they don't use money. It don't take money especially to live; it's only when you die that you or somebody has got to have something put away in the sock. A man can eat and sleep and keep the purity squad off of him for six months on what the undertaker will make you believe you can't possibly be planted for a cent less and preserve your self-respect. So what would they have to bury him with even if they had him to bury?"

"You talk like he didn't kill himself taking a chance to win two thousand dollars," the third said.

"That's correct. Oh, he would have taken the money, all right. But that wasn't why he was flying that ship up there. He would have entered it if he hadn't had anything but a bicycle, just so it would have got off the ground. But it ain't for money.

It's because they have got to do it, like some women have got to be whores. They can't help themselves. Ord knew that the ship was dangerous, and Shumann must have known it as well as Ord did—don't you remember how for the first lap he stayed so far away he didn't even look like he was in the same race, until he forgot and came in and tried to catch Ord? If it had just been the money, do you think he could have thought about money hard enough to have decided to risk his life to get it in a machine that he knew was unsafe, and then have forgot about the money for a whole lap of the race while he hung back there not half as close to the pylons as the judges were, just riding around? Don't kid yourself."

"And don't kid yourself," the first said. "It was the money. Those guys like money as well as you and me. What would he have done with it? Hell, what would any other three people do with two thousand bucks? She would have bought herself a batch of new clothes and they would have moved to the hotel from wherever it was they were staying, and they would have taken a couple of days and blowed it out good. That's what they would have done. But they didn't get it and so you are right, by God: what she did was the sensible thing: when a game blows up in your face you don't sit down on the pocket-book that used to make a bump on your ass and cry about it, you get out and hustle up another roll and go on and find another game that maybe you can beat. Yes. They want money, all right. But it ain't to sweat just to have something in the sock when the snow flies, or to be buried with either. So I don't know any more than you guys do, but if somebody told me that Shumann had some folks somewhere and then they told me the name of the town she bought hers and the kid's tickets to, I would tell you where Shumann used to live. And then I would bet a quarter maybe that the next time you see them, the kid won't be there. Because why? Because that's what I would do if I were her. And so would you guys."

"No," the second said.

"You mean you wouldn't or she wouldn't?" the first said. The reporter sat motionless, the cigarette's windless upstream breaking

upon his face. "Yes," the first said. "Before, they might not have known whose the kid was, but it was Shumann's name he went under and so in comparison to the whole mess they must have lived in, who had actually fathered the kid didn't matter. But now Shumann's gone; you asked a while ago what she was thinking about while he was sitting up there waiting for the water to hit him. I'll tell you what she and the other guy were both thinking about: that now that Shumann was gone, they would never get rid of him. Maybe they took it night about: I don't know. But now they couldn't even get him out of the room; even turning off the light won't do any good, and all the time they would be awake and moving there he will be, watching them right out of the mixed-up name, Jack Shumann, that the kid has. It used to be the guy had one competitor; now he will have to compete with every breath the kid draws and be cuckolded by every ghost that walks and refuses to give his name. So if you will tell me that Shumann has some folks in a certain town, I will tell you where she and the kid——" The reporter did not move. He sat quite still while the voice ceased on that note of abrupt transition, hearing out of the altered silence the voices talking at him and the eyes talking at him while he held himself rigid, watching the calculated hand flick the ash carefully from the cigarette. "You hung around them a lot," the first said. "Did you ever hear any of them mention any kin that Shumann or she had?" The reporter did not move; he let the voice repeat the question; he even raised the cigarette again and flicked the ash off, or what would have been ash if he had not flicked it only a second ago. Then he started; he sat up, looking at them with an expression of startled interrogation.

"What?" he said. "What was that? I wasn't listening."

"Did you ever hear any mention of Shumann having any kinsfolks, mother and father and such?" the first said. The reporter's face did not alter.

"No," he said. "I don't believe I did. I believe his mechanic told me that he was an orphan."

It was two o'clock then but the cab went fast, so it was just past two-thirty when the cab reached the Terrebonne and the

reporter entered and leaned his gaunt desperate face across the desk while he spoke to the clerk. "Don't you call yourselves the headquarters of the American Aeronautical Association?" he said. "You mean you didn't keep any registration of contestants and such? that the committee just let them scatter to hell and gone over New Valois without——"

"Who is it you want to find?" the clerk said.

"Art Jackson. A stunt flyer."

"I'll see if there is any record. The meet was over yesterday." The clerk left the window. The repoter leaned in it, not panting, just completely motionless until the clerk returned.

"There is an Arthur Jackson registered as staying at the Bienville hotel yesterday. But whether or not he is——" But the reporter was gone, not running, but walking fast, back towards the entrance; a porter with a long-handled brush sweeping the floor jerked it back just before the reporter was about to walk through the brush-handle as if it were a spiderweb. The taxi-driver did not know exactly where the Bienville was, but at last they found it—a side street, a sign reading mostly Turkish Bath, then a narrow entrance, a corridor dimly lighted and containing a few chairs, a few palms, more spittoons than either, and a desk beside which a negro in no uniform slept—a place ambiguous, redolent of hard Saturday nights, whose customers seldom had any baggage and beyond the turnings of whose dim and threadbare corridors there seemed to whisk for ever bright tawdry kimonos in a kind of hopeful nostalgic convocation of all the bought female flesh which ever breathed and perished, The negro waked; there was no elevator; the reporter was directed to the room from his description of Jiggs and knocked beneath the ghost of two numbers attached to the door's surface by the ghost of four tacks until the door opened and Jiggs blinked at him with the good eye and the injured one, wearing now only the shirt. The reporter held in his hand the slip of paper which had been clipped to the money the jumper gave him. He did not blink, himself: he just stared at Jiggs with that desperate urgency.

"The tickets," he said. "Where——"

"Oh," Jiggs said. "Myron, Ohio. Yair, that's it on the paper.

Roger's old man. They're going to leave the kid there. I thought you knew. You said you saw Jack at the—— Here, doc! What is this?" He opened the door wider and put out his hand, but the reporter had already caught the door-jamb. "You come on in and set down a——"

"Myron, Ohio," the reporter said. His face wore again that faint wrung quiet grimace as with the other hand he continued to trv to put Jiggs' hand aside even after Jiggs was no longer offering to touch him. He began to apologize to Jiggs for having disturbed him, talking through that thin wash over his wasted gaunt face which would have been called smiling for lack of anything better.

"It's all right, doc," Jiggs said, watching him, blinking still with a sort of brutal concern. "Jesus, ain't you been to bed yet? Here; you better come in here; me and Art can make room——"

"Yes, I'll be getting on." He pushed himself carefully back from the door as though he were balancing himself before turning the door loose, feeling Jiggs watching him. "I just happened to drop in. To say good-bye." He looked at Jiggs with that thin fixed grimace while Jiggs blinked at him.

"Good-bye, doc. Only you better——"

"And good luck to you. Or do you say happy landings to a parachute jumper?"

"Jesus," Jiggs said. "I hope so."

"Then happy landings too."

"Yair. Thanks. The same to you, doc." The reporter turned away. Jiggs watched him go down the corridor, walking with that curious light stiff care, and turn the corner and vanish. The light was even dimmer on the stairs than it had been in the corridor, though the brass strips which bound the rubber tread to each step glinted bright and still in the centre where the heels had kept it polished. The negro was already asleep again in the chair beside the desk; he did not stir as the reporter passed him and went on and got into the cab, stumbling a little on the step.

"Back to the airport," he said. "You needn't hurry. We got until daylight." He was back on the beach before daylight,

though it was dawn before the other four saw him again, before they came out of the dark lunch-stand and passed again through another barricade of parked cars (though not so many this time since it was now Monday), and descended to the beach. They saw him then. The smooth water was a pale rose colour from the waxing east, so that the reporter in silhouette against it resembled a tatting Christmas gift made by a little girl and supposed to represent a sleeping crane.

"Good Lord," the third said. "You suppose he has been down here by himself all the time?" But they did not have much time to wonder about it; they were barely on time themselves; they heard the aeroplane taking off before they reached the beach and then they watched it circling; it came over into what they thought was position and the sound of the engine died for a time and then began again and the aeroplane went on, though nothing else happened. They saw nothing fall from it at all, they just saw three gulls converge suddenly from nowhere and begin to slant and tilt and scream above a spot on the water some distance away, making a sound like rusty shutters in a wind. "So that's that," the third said. "Let's go to town." Again the fourth one spoke the reporter's name.

"Are we going to wait for him?" he said. They looked back, but the reporter was gone.

"He must have got a ride with somebody," the third said. "Come on. Let's go."

When the reporter got out of the car at the Saint Jules Avenue corner the clock beyond the restaurant's window said eight o'clock. He did not look at the clock; he was looking at nothing for the time, shaking slowly and steadily. It was going to be another bright vivid day; the sunlight, the streets and walls themselves emanated that brisk up-and-doing sobriety of Monday morning. But he was not looking at that either; he was not looking at anything. When he began to see it was as if the letters were beginning to emerge from the back of his skull—the broad page under a rusting horseshoe, the quality of grateful astonishment which Monday headlines have like when you learn that the uncle whom you believed to have perished two

years ago in a poor-house fire died yesterday in Tucson, Arizona and left you five hundred dollars:

AVIATOR'S BODY RESIGNED TO LAKE GRAVE

Then he quit seeing it. He had not moved; his pupils would still have repeated the page in inverted miniature, but he was not seeing it at all, shaking quietly and steadily in the bright warm sun until he turned and looked into the window with an expression of quiet and bemused despair—the not-flies or were-flies, the two grape-fruit halves, the printed names of food like the printed stations in a train schedule and set on an easel like a family portrait—and experienced not only that profound and unshakable reluctance but actual absolute refusal of his entire organism. "All right," he said. "If I won't eat, then I am going to take a drink. If I won't go in here then I am going to Joe's." It was not far: just down an alley and through a barred door—one of the places where for fifteen years the United States had tried to keep them from selling whiskey and where for one year now it had been trying to make them sell it. The porter let him in and poured him a drink in the empty bar while starting the cork in another bottle. "Yair," the reporter said. "I was on the wagon for an entire day. Would you believe that?"

"Not about you," the porter said.

"Neither would I. It surprised me. It surprised the hell out of me until I found out it was two other guys. See?" He laughed too; it wasn't loud; it still didn't seem loud even after the porter was holding him up, calling him by name too, mister too, like Leonora, saying:

"Come on, now; try to quit now."

"All right," the reporter said. "I've quit now. If you ever saw any man quitter than me right now I will buy you an aeroplane."

"O.K.," the porter said. "Only make it a taxi-cab and you go on home."

"Home? I just come from home. I'm going to work now. I'm O.K. now. Give me another shot and just point me towards the door and I will be all right. All right, see? Then I learned by

mistake that it was two other guys——" But he stopped himself, this time; he held himself fine while the porter poured the other drink and brought it to him. He had himself in hand fine now; he did not feel at all: just the liquor flowing slowly down him, fiery, dead, and cold. Soon he would even quit shaking, soon he did quit; walking now with the bright unsoiled morning falling upon him he did not have anything to shake with. "So I feel better," he said. Then he began to say it fast: "Oh God, I feel better! I feel better! I feel! I feel!" until he quit that too and said quietly, with tragic and passive clairvoyance, looking at the familiar wall, the familiar twin door through which he was about to pass: "Something is going to happen to me. I have got myself stretched out too far and too thin and something is going to bust."

He mounted the quiet stairs; in the empty corridor he drank from the bottle, though this time it was merely cold and felt like water. But when he entered the deserted city room he remembered that he could have drunk here just as well, and so he did. "I see so little of it," he said. "I don't know the family's habits yet." But it was empty, or comparatively so, because he kept on making that vertical reverse without any rudder or flippers and looking down on the close-peopled land and the empty lake and deciding, and the dredge-boat hanging over him for twenty hours and then having to lie there too and look up at the wreath dissolving, faintly rocking and stared at by gulls, away and trying to explain that he did not know. "I didn't think of that!" he cried. "I just thought they were all going. I don't know where, but I thought that all three of them, that maybe the hundred and seventy-five would be enough until Homes could . . . and that then he would be big enough and I would be there; I would maybe see her first and she would not look different even though he was out there around the pylon, and so I wouldn't either even if I was forty-two instead of twenty-eight, and he would come on in off the pylons and we would go up and she maybe holding my arm and him looking at us over the cockpit and she would say, 'This is the one back in New Valois that time. That used to buy you the ice-cream.' "

Then he had to hurry, saying, "Wait. Stop now. Stop," until he did stop, tall, humped a little, moving his mouth faintly as if he were tasting, blinking fast now and now stretching his eyelids to their full extent like a man trying to keep himself awake while driving a car; again it tasted, felt, like so much dead icy water, cold and heavy and lifeless in his stomach; when he moved he could both hear and feel it sluggish and dead within him as he removed his coat and hung it on the chairback and sat down and racked a sheet of yellow paper into the machine. He could not feel his fingers on the keys either; he just watched the letters materialize out of thin air, black, sharp and fast, along the creeping yellow.

During the night the little boy slept on the seat facing the woman and the parachute jumper, the toy aeroplane clutched to his chest; when daylight came the train was running in snow. They changed trains in snow too, and when in mid-afternoon the train-man called the town and looking out the window the woman read the name on the little station, it was snowing hard. They got out and crossed the platform, among the milk-cans and the fowl-crates, and entered the waiting-room where a porter was putting coal into the stove. "Can we get a cab here?" the jumper asked him.

"There's one outside now," the porter said. "I'll call him."

"Thanks," the jumper said. The jumper looked at the woman; she was buttoning the trench-coat. "I'll wait here," he said.

"Yes," she said. "All right. I don't know how——"

"I'll wait. No use standing around anywhere else."

"Ain't he coming with us?" the little boy said. He looked at the jumper, the toy aeroplane under his arm now, though he still spoke to the woman. "Don't he want to see Roger's old man too?"

"No," the woman said. "You tell him good-bye now."

"Good-bye?" the boy said. He looked from one to the other. "Ain't we coming back?" He looked from one to the other. "I'll stay here with him until you get back. I'll see Roger's old man some other time."

"No," the woman said. "Now." The boy looked from one to the other. Suddenly the jumper said:

"So long, kid. I'll be seeing you."

"You're going to wait? You ain't going off?"

"No. I'll wait. You and Laverne go on." The porter came in.

"He's waiting for you folks," he said.

"The cab's waiting," the woman said. "Tell Jack so long."

"O.K.," the boy said. "You wait here for us. Soon as we get back we'll eat."

"Yair; sure," the jumper said. Suddenly he set the bag down and stooped and picked the boy up.

"No," the woman said; "you wait here out of the——" But the jumper went on, carrying the little boy, swinging his stiff leg along. The woman followed him, into the snow again. The cab was a small touring car with a lettered sign on the wind-shield and a blanket over the hood and driven by a man with a scraggly greyish moustache. The driver opened the door; the jumper swung the boy in, stepped back and helped the woman in, and leaned again into the door; now his face wore an expression which anyone who had seen very much of the reporter lately would have recognized—that faint grimace (in this instance savage too) which would have been called smiling for lack of anything better.

"So long, old fellow," he said. "Be good now."

"O.K.," the boy said. "You be looking around for somewhere to eat before we get back."

"O.K.," the jumper said.

"All right, mister," the woman said. "Let's go." The car moved, swinging away from the station; the woman was still leaning forward. "Do you know where Doctor Carl Shumann lives?" she said. For an instant the driver did not move. The car still swung on, gaining speed, and there was little possible moving for the driver to do. Yet during that moment he seemed to have become caught in that sort of instantaneous immobility like when a sudden light surprises a man or an animal out of darkness. Then it was gone.

"Doctor Shumann? Sure. You want to go there?"

"Yes," the woman said. It was not far; the town was not large; it seemed to the woman that almost at once the car had stopped, and looking out through the falling snow she saw a kind of cenotaph, penurious and without majesty or dignity, of forlorn and victorious desolation—a bungalow, a tight flimsy mass of stoops and porte-cochères and flat gables and bays not five years old and built in that coloured mud-and-chicken-wire tradition which California moving-picture films have scattered across North America as if the celluloid carried germs. It was not five years old, yet it wore already an air of dilapidation and rot; a quality furious and recent as if immediate disintegration had been included in the architect's blueprints and inherent in the wood and plaster and sand of its mushroom growth. Then she found the driver looking at her.

"This is it," he said. "Or maybe you were thinking about his old place? or are you acquainted with him that well?"

"No," the woman said. "This is it." He made no move to open the door; he just sat half-turned, watching her struggling with the door handle.

"He used to have a big old place out in the country until he lost it a few years back. His son took up av-aytion and he mortgaged the place to buy his son a flying machine and then his son wrecked the machine and so the doctor had to borrow some more money on the place to fix the machine up. I guess the boy aimed to pay it back but he just never got around to it maybe. So he lost the old place and built this one. Prob'ly this one suits him just as well, though; womenfolks usually like to live close to town——" But she had got the door open now and she and the boy got out.

"Do you mind waiting?" she said. "I don't know how long I'll be. I'll pay you for the time."

"Sure," he said. "That's my business. What you do with the car while you are hiring it is yours, not mine." He watched them enter the gate and go on up the narrow concrete walk in the snow. "So that's her," he thought. "Only she don't look a whole lot like a widow. But then I hear tell she never acted a whole

lot like a wife." He had a robe, another horse-blanket, in the seat beside him. He bundled himself into it, which was just as well because dark had come and the snow drifted and whirled, funnelled now by the down-glare of a street-lamp nearby before the door opened and he recognized against the light the silhouette of the trench-coat and then that of Doctor Shumann as they came out and the door shut behind them. He threw the robe off and started the engine. But after a while he cut the switch and drew the robe about him again, though it was too dark and the snow was falling too fast for him to see the two people standing on the stoop before the entrance of the house.

"You are going to leave him like this?" Dr. Shumann said. "You are going to leave him asleep and go away?"

"Can you think of any better way?" she said.

"No. That's true." He was speaking loudly, too loudly. "Let us understand one another. You leave him here of your own free will; we are to make a home for him until we die: that is understood."

"Yes. I agreed to that inside," she said patiently.

"No; but let us understand. I——" He talked in that curious, loud, wild, rushing manner, as though she were still moving away and were at some distance now: "We are old; you cannot understand that, that you will or can ever reach a time when you can bear so much and no more; that nothing else is worth the bearing; that you not only cannot, you will not; that nothing is worth anything but peace, peace, peace, even with bereavement and grief—nothing! nothing! But we have reached that stage. When you came here with Roger that day before the boy was born, you and I talked and I talked different to you. I was different then; I meant it when you told me you did not know whether or not Roger was the father of your unborn child and that you would never know, and I told you, do you remember? I said, 'Then make Roger his father from now on.' And you told me the truth that you would not promise, that you were born bad and could not help it or did not think you were going to try to help it; and I told you nobody is born anything, bad or good, God help us, any more than anybody can do anything save what

they must: do you remember? I meant that then. But I was younger then. And now I am not young. And now I can't—I cannot—I——"

"I know. If I leave him with you, I must not try to see him again until you and she are dead."

"Yes. I must; I cannot help it. I just want peace now. I don't want equity or justice, I don't want happiness; I just want peace. We won't live very much longer, and then——"

She laughed, short, mirthless, not moving. "And then he will have forgotten me."

"That's your risk. Because, remember," he cried; "remember! I don't ask this. I did not ask you to leave him, to bring him to us. You can go up now and wake him and take him with you. But if you do not, if you leave him with us and turn your back on this house and go away—— Think well. If you like, take him with you to-night, to the hotel or wherever and think about it and make up your mind and bring him back to-morrow or come yourself and tell me what you have decided."

"I have decided now," she said.

"That you leave him here of your own free will. That we give him the home and care and affection which is his right both as a helpless child and as our gra—grand—and that in return for this, you are to make no attempt to see him or communicate with him as long as we live. That is your understanding, your agreement? Think well."

"Yes," she said. "I have to do it."

"But you do not. You can take him with you now; all this to-night can be as if it had never happened. You are his mother; I still believe that any mother is better—better than—— How do you have to?"

"Because I don't know whether I can buy him enough food to eat and enough clothes to keep him warm and medicine if he is sick," she said. "Do you understand that?"

"I understand that this—your—this other man does not earn as much in his line as Roger did in his. But you tell me Roger did not always earn enough for the four of you: nevertheless you never thought while Roger was alive of leaving the boy with

us. And now; with one less mouth to feed, you try to tell me that you——"

"I'll tell you, if you will listen a minute," she said. "I'm going to have another child." Now he did not speak at all; his unfinished sentence seemed to hang between them. They stood face to face but they could not see one another: just the two vague shapes with the snow falling between them and upon them, though since her back was to the street lamp she could see him the better of the two. After a while he said quietly:

"I see. Yes. And you know that this other child is—is not——"

"Not Roger's. Yes. Roger and I were—— But no matter. I know, this time. Roger and I both know. So we will need money and that's what Roger was trying to do in that meet. The ship he won a prize with the first day was too slow, obsolete. But that was all we could get and he outflew them, beat them on the pylons, by turning the pylons closer than the others dared for that little money. Then Saturday he had a chance to fly a ship that was dangerous, but he had a chance to win two thousand dollars in the race. That would have fixed us up. But the ship came to pieces in the air. Maybe I could have stopped him. I don't know. But maybe I could have. But I didn't. I didn't try, anyhow. So now we didn't get that money, and we left most of the first day's prize to send his body here when they get it out of the lake."

"Ah," Dr. Shumann said. "I see. Yes. So you are giving us the chance to—the opportunity to——" Suddenly he cried: "If I just knew that he is Roger's! If I just knew! Can't you tell me? Can't you give me some sign, some little sign? Any little sign?" She didn't move. The light came through the snow, across her shoulder, and she could see him a little—a small thin man with untidy, thin, iron-grey hair and the snow whispering in it, standing with his face turned aside and his hand not before it exactly but held palm out between his face and hers. After a while she said:

"Maybe you would rather take a little time to think about it. To decide." She could not see his face now: only the lifted hand;

she seemed to be speaking to the hand: "Suppose I wait at the hotel until to-morrow, so——" The hand moved, a faint motion from the wrist as though it were trying to push her voice away. But she repeated, once more, as though for a record: "You mean you don't want me to wait?" But only the hand moved again, replied; she turned quietly and went down the steps, feeling for each step beneath the snow, and went on down the walk, vanishing into the drowsing pantomime of the snow, not fast. She did not look back. Dr. Shumann did not watch her. He heard the engine of the car start, but he was already turning, entering the house, fumbling at the door for a moment before he found the knob and entered, his hair and shoulders (he was in his shirt-sleeves) powdered with snow. He went on down the hall; his wife, sitting beside the bed in the darkened room where the boy was asleep, heard him blunder against something in the hall and then saw him come into the door, framed against the lighted hall, holding to the door frame, the light glinting in the melting snow in his untidy hair.

"If we just had a sign," he said. He entered, stumbling again. She rose and approached him, but he pushed her aside, entering. "Let me be," he said.

"Shhhhhh," she said. "Don't wake him. You come on and eat your supper."

"Let me alone," he said, pushing with his hand at the empty air now since she stood back, watching him approach the bed, fumbling at the foot-board. But his voice was quiet enough. "Go out," he said. "Leave me be. Go away and leave me be."

"You come on and eat your supper and lay down."

"Go on. I'm all right, I tell you." She obeyed; he stood holding to the bed's foot-board and heard her feet move slowly up the hall and cease. Then he moved, fumbling until he found the light-cord, the bulb, and turned it on. The little boy stirred, turning his face from the light. The garment in which he slept was a man's shirt, an old-fashioned garment with a once-glazed bosom, soft now from many washings, pinned about his throat with a gold brooch and with the sleeves cut recently off at his

wrists. On the pillow beside him the toy aeroplane rested. Suddenly Dr. Shumann stooped and took the boy by the shoulder and began to shake him. The toy aeroplane slid from the pillow; with his other hand Dr. Shumann flipped it to the floor, still shaking the little boy. "Roger," he said, "wake up. Wake up, Roger." The boy waked; without moving he blinked up at the man's face bending over him.

"Laverne," he said. "Jack. Where's Laverne? Where'm I at?"

"Laverne's gone," Dr. Shumann said, still shaking the boy as though he had forgot to tell his muscles to desist. "You're at home, but Laverne is gone. Gone, I tell you. Are you going to cry? Hey?" The boy blinked up at him, then he turned and put out his hand towards the pillow beside him.

"Where's my new job?" he said. "Where's my ship?"

"Your ship, hey?" Dr. Shumann said. "Your ship, hey?" He stooped and caught up the toy and held it up, his face twisted into a grimace of gnome-like rage, and whirled and hurled the toy at the wall and, while the boy watched him, ran to it and began to stamp upon it with blind maniacal fury. The little boy made one sharp sound: then, silent, raised on one elbow, his eyes a little wide as though with curious interest alone, he watched the shabby wild-haired old man jumping up and down upon the shapeless trivial mass of blue-and-yellow tin in maniacal ludicrousness. Then the little boy saw him pause, stoop, take up the ruined toy and apparently begin to try to tear it to pieces with his hands. His wife, sitting beside the living-room stove, heard his feet too through the flimsy walls, feeling the floor shake too, then she heard him approaching up the hall, fast now. She was small—a faded woman with faded eyes and a quiet faded face sitting in the stuffy room containing a worn divan and fumed oak chairs and a fumed oak revolving bookcase racked neatly with battered medical books from whose bindings the gilt-embossed titles had long since vanished, and a table littered with medical magazines on which lay at the moment a thick cap with ear-muffs, a pair of mittens and a small scuffed black bag. She did not move: she was sitting there watching the door when

Dr. Shumann came in, holding one hand out before him; she did not stir even then: she just looked quietly at the mass of money. "It was in that aeroplane!" he said. "He even had to hide his money from her!"

"No," the wife said. "She hid it from him."

"No!" he shouted. "He hid it from her. For the boy. Do you think a woman would ever hide money or anything else and then forget where she put it? And where would she get a hundred and seventy-five dollars, anyway?"

"Yes," the wife said, the faded eyes filled with immeasurable and implacable unforgiving; "where would she get a hundred and seventy-five dollars that she would have to hide from both of them in a child's toy?" He looked at her for a long moment.

"Ah," he said. He said it quietly: "Oh. Yes. I see." Then he cried, "But no matter! It don't matter now!" He stooped and swung open the door of the stove and shut it again; she did not move, not even when, glancing past him as he stooped, she saw in the door and looking in at them, the little boy in the man's shirt carrying against his chest the battered mass of the toy in one hand and the clothes which he had worn wadded in the other, his cap already on. Dr. Shumann had not seen him yet; he rose from the stove; it was the draught of course, from the opening and closing of the door, but it did seem as though it were the money itself passing in flame and fire up the pipe with a deep faint roar into nothing as Dr. Shumann stood again, looking down at her. "It's our boy," he said; then he shouted: "It's our boy, I tell you!" Then he collapsed; he seemed to let go all at once, though not hard because of his spareness, on to his knees beside the chair, his head in her lap, crying.

When the city room began to fill that evening a copy-boy noticed the overturned waste-basket beside the reporter's desk and the astonishing amount of savagely defaced and torn copy which littered the adjacent floor. The copy-boy was a bright lad, about to graduate from high-school; he had not only ambitions but dreams too. He gathered up from the floor all the sheets, whole and in fragments, emptied the waste-basket and, sitting at the reporter's desk he began to sort them, discarding and

fitting and resorting at the last to paste; then, his eyes big with excitement and exultation and then downright triumph, he regarded what he had salvaged and restored to order and coherence—the sentences and paragraphs which he believed to be not only news but the beginning of literature:

"On Thursday Roger Shumann flew a race against four competitors, and won. On Saturday he flew against but one competitor. But that competitor was Death, and Roger Shumann lost. And so to-day a lone aeroplane flew out over the lake on the wings of dawn and circled the spot where Roger Shumann got the Last Checkered Flag, and vanished back into the dawn from whence it came.

"Thus two friends told him farewell. Two friends, yet two competitors too, whom he had met in fair contest and conquered in the lonely sky from which he fell, dropping a simple wreath to mark his Last Pylon."

It stopped there, but the copy-boy did not. "O Jesus," he whispered. "Maybe Hagood will let me finish it!" already moving towards the desk where Hagood now sat, though the copy-boy had not seen him enter. Hagood had just sat down; the copy-boy, his mouth already open, paused behind Hagood. Then he became more complete vassal to surprise than ever, for lying on Hagood's desk and and weighted down neatly by an empty whiskey bottle was another sheet of copy which Hagood and the copy-boy read together:

"At midnight last night the search for the body of Roger Shumann, racing pilot who plunged into the lake Saturday p.m., was finally abandoned by a three-place biplane of about eighty horse-power which managed to fly out over the water and return without falling to pieces and dropping a wreath of flowers into the water approximately three-quarters of a mile away from where Shumann's body is generally supposed to be since they were precision pilots and so did not miss the entire lake. Mrs. Shumann departed with her husband and children

for Ohio, where it is understood that their six-year-old son will spend an indefinite time with some of his grandparents and where any and all finders of Roger Shumann are kindly requested to forward any and all of same."

And beneath this, savagely in pencil: *I guess this is what you want, you bastard, and now I am going down to Amboise St. and get drunk awhile and if you don't know where Amboise St. is ask your son to tell you and if you don't know what drunk is come down there and look at me and when you come bring some jack because I am on a credit.*

MADURAI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
14 SEP 1971
-2

Printed in Great Britain by
Lowe and Brydone (Printers) Limited, London, N.W.10